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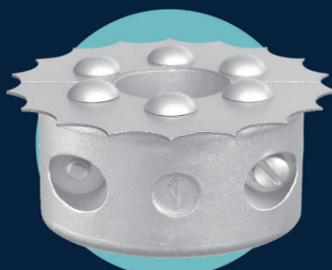
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In recent months, the marine industry has been managing a shifting patchwork of tariffs and countermeasures that continue to unsettle supply chains and complicate long-term planning.

In this issue, Mustang Survival, PropSpeed and Shakespeare International share perspectives on staying nimble, model planning and operating in today's complex landscape

Oyster Yachts' strategic advisor Törsten Müller-Ötvös - ex-CEO of Rolls-Royce - talks strategies for engaging ultra-high-net-worth clients and the art of brand building.

And while the current climate has thrown curve balls and points more towards consolidation than hoped-for growth, many businesses are demonstrating adaptability. The industry coming together at this season's major boat shows feels a timely reminder that collective dialogue and the ability to explore fresh opportunities is one of the sector's greatest strengths.

Chantal

Brand power

Torsten Müller-Ötvös, former Rolls-Royce CEO, joined Oyster Yachts this year. Here, he reflects on the potency of brand positioning and what the marine sector can learn from the automotive world

Words: Chantal Haines



Torsten Müller-Ötvös has joined Oyster Yachts

When Oyster Yachts announced in May 2025 that Torsten Müller-Ötvös would join as strategic adviser, it marked a significant step for the British yachtbuilder.

Credited with reshaping Rolls-Royce into a modern powerhouse during his 14-year tenure, Müller-Ötvös is now setting about sharpening Oyster's brand positioning and extending its global reach.

Müller-Ötvös sees clear parallels between the two brands, pointing to Oyster's "relentless pursuit of excellence" as a hallmark shared with Rolls-Royce.

In the ultra high net worth (UHNW) segment, he argues, success

results from a combination of craftsmanship, detail and a brand that resonates on an emotional level. Müller-Ötvös is adamant that off the shelf simply won't have a place in the UHNW arena in future.

"In five to ten years, you will hardly see anything in the luxury sector that is off-shelf. Clients are really interested in building their own dreams and want to commission something that carries their own story," he says.

Elevating for ultra high net worth

Müller-Ötvös stresses that investment in world-class service will be key to making yacht ownership more intuitive, luxurious and genuinely personalised.

He cites Rolls-Royce's renowned 'flying doctor' programme as an example of the support ultra-high-net-worth clients have come to expect.

"If a [Rolls-Royce] dealer partner is unable to resolve an issue, a flying doctor is dispatched immediately to assist the client."

Talking at Oyster Yachts' London showcase in May 2025, Müller-Ötvös suggested the British yachtbuilder is exploring similarly bespoke approaches to customer care, "to make the experience of sailing around the world effortless and as pleasurable as possible for clients. That is, I think, exactly what is needed."

Evolving an ocean legacy

One of the first priorities, Müller-Ötvös says, is for Oyster is to tell its story more boldly.

"It is essential to continue building on Oyster's renowned heritage and global reputation while introducing a new era of customisation, elevated luxury, and immersive experiences."

He points to a rising generation of individuals who deeply value immersion, privacy, comfort, and seamless service.

Müller-Ötvös says: "These owners aren't simply looking for yachts, they're seeking platforms for once-

in-a-lifetime experiences. They are experience-hungry, brand-conscious, and eager for effortless access to adventure."

Oyster's stable of customer-centric bespoke events is, indeed, expanding. Its Oyster Rally hosts 30 yachts on a 27,000nm, 27 destination, 16-month world circumnavigation. Building on the rally, the brand launched the Oyster Explorer Club, offering fully supported, curated voyages to stunning destinations. It aims to connect owners across the world, fostering a sense of community where they can share their journeys and support one another."

"This is not just a yacht builder but a brand that embodies inspiring adventure in unparalleled luxury, comfort, and reassuring safety," he explains. "There is a significant opportunity to expand access to the Oyster experience, not only through yacht ownership but also through initiatives like the Oyster World Rally and the Oyster Explorers Club, which are exactly the right direction [to take]."

"What's particularly interesting," says Müller-Ötvös, "is the increasing number of individuals coming to us with no prior sailing experience."

Oyster's Bluewater Academy provides customers with sailing training tailored to each individual's skill level. "They view Oyster, and especially the



Richard Hadida acquired Oyster Yachts in 2018 after it fell into administration

“These owners aren’t simply looking for yachts, they’re looking for once-in-a-lifetime experiences... I think you need to rock brands from time to time, to move them on and keep them relevant.”

Torsten Müller-Ötvös,
Oyster Yachts



The Oyster 805 is the latest addition to the fleet

Oyster World Rally, as a compelling entry point into this world, often turning to services like our Bluewater Academy to build their sailing skills.”

Oyster: back from the brink

Oyster’s resurgence – and its expanding fleet (the yard announced its 805 model in 2025, due for launch in 2027) – is all the more striking given its recent past.

In 2018, UK entrepreneur Richard Hadida acquired Oyster, which was in the midst of dire financial difficulties. Since then, investment and focused leadership have reversed its fortunes.

Hadida says: “I bought the company because I love the brand. I used to read articles referring to Oyster as the ‘Rolls-Royce of the seas’. I like the best of the best. I like knowing that when I’m crossing an ocean, I’m in the best possible machine on the planet.

“Now, I’m aspiring to push the brand – and elevate, elevate, elevate.” The turnaround has been impressive – the yacht builder posted record sales last year in what has been a challenging environment.

There are more changes afoot at Oyster with Stefan Zimmermann Zschocke taking the role of chief executive officer (CEO) in September 2025, following Ashley Highfield’s departure after seven years at the helm.

Zimmermann Zschocke has held senior roles at Rolls-Royce Power Solutions and, most recently, served on the executive board of HanseYachts, and is expected to bring more cross-industry insight to the brand.

Reflecting on Müller-Ötvös’s arrival, Hadida adds: “I pursued Torsten for quite some time – because he did literally turn around Rolls-Royce and transformed it into arguably the most profitable car company on the planet. He shares my obsession with detail – examining every element under the microscope to ensure these yachts are the absolute best they can be.”

Lessons from Rolls-Royce

Müller-Ötvös is no stranger to bold changes.

“One of the most controversial decisions I made [at Rolls-Royce] was deciding to enter the SUV segment. For many clients, and the press, it was unthinkable that Rolls-Royce would ever enter that territory. But we did it. We took our time to do it, but we did it. And I can tell you, it was the best decision, probably in my entire life, because the [SUV series] was extremely successful.”

The lesson, he says, is that brands must evolve to keep up. “I think you need to rock brands from time to time, to move them on and keep them relevant,” he adds.

“Imagine where that brand would stand today without having an SUV. He says moving into the SUV market “was a controversial, but a brilliant decision,” and explains Rolls-Royce’s SUV series opened up “completely new garage doors and new segments”.

“We saw for the very first time, a lot of female owners coming to Rolls-Royce,” continues Müller-Ötvös. “Particularly in the United States, but also in Asia and the UK. Female owners enjoyed that kind of effortless, easy riding, and the fact you could use this car daily for whatever you wanted.”

The key to brand marketing, he says, is to never leave the client out of focus. For Oyster, the strength of its bond with owners – referred to by Hadida as the “Oyster family” – is a powerful asset.

When developing its Explorer Club, the company turned directly to its community to help shape future offerings. “I think that’s great,” adds Müller-Ötvös. “Listen to your clients. They are the most relevant people in the company.”

Time to rock the Oyster brand?

Renowned for his strategic insight, Müller-Ötvös says there’s one other brand he reveres for its remarkable consistency and long-term vision.

“There’s one brand I admire massively, and that is Hermès

because it is unbelievable resilient, and successful. It goes from strength to strength. Hermès is now out-valuing LVMH, which was seen as impossible before. And the reason for being so successful is it is family owned. They don’t need to report to the stock market. They have a clear vision of what they do, and they are extremely strict in executing it. And I really like this kind of brand management, which is very much about the details and what the brand stands for.”

The power of transforming the customer journey into something deeply emotional and personal, rather than purely transactional is a goal. “Owners should feel not only valued but genuinely connected to the brand,” Müller-Ötvös says.

It is this connection, he says, that will prove defining for brands in the UHNW sector as they shift focus toward experience-driven value.

“Product is relevant, but experiences and services and everything that is around the brand is more and more important,” adds Müller-Ötvös.

Regarding his role, Müller-Ötvös is clear about his mission: “My role is to help guide the long-term vision, offering strategic guidance and encouraging bold, forward-thinking decisions that will position Oyster Yachts for continued success while staying authentic to what makes it so special.” ■

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Dave Manasseh, international sales manager for Shakespeare International, talks regional strategies, tariffs, production optimisation, and breaking into established markets

Antenna design and material solutions company Shakespeare International has embarked on a significant geographic expansion strategy of late – tackling mature markets and vying with established competition. The company has also established a presence in entirely new-to-marine markets. Both come with challenges, says Dave Manasseh, international sales manager for Shakespeare antennas & industrial products, who sat down with *MIN* in June 2025 to discuss how the company has grown.

“With our HQ in America, over time we have identified our key marine regions outside of the US and created tailored strategies for each. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach,” says Manasseh. “It’s been about learning the unique needs of each market and adapting accordingly.”

Breaking into Europe

When Shakespeare began actively expanding in Europe more than a decade ago, the company was entering a well-established market

where companies had long-standing brand loyalties. “We only began selling into mainland Europe in the early 2010s, by which point many major distributors had already cemented relationships with other antenna brands. Convincing them of the value Shakespeare adds to their portfolio takes time, but we’re making strong progress.

“Our initial strategy was clear: to target countries with little to no existing sales and build a distribution network that covered the continent,” explains Manasseh.

“Today, 90 per cent of European countries now stock Shakespeare products.

“We have taken steps to consolidate some of our smaller distribution partners into larger accounts – which has proven very effective. At the same time, we made it known we were actively seeking new distribution partners, which brought in fresh and proactive companies that wanted to work with us. Denmark is a great

example, where we’ve seen real success with Scan Marine.” As the company’s presence in Europe has matured, so has its strategy. “We’ve evolved by changing partners when necessary, to enable further growth. On average, we add two to three new partners across Europe each year and our sales have grown year-on-year for the past eight years – excluding a brief dip during covid.”

Like most sectors of the marine industry, Shakespeare has been weathering the slower current market. He says: “2024 was a tough year in Europe. The biggest difference was that I was ringing people instead of them ringing me. The economy in the UK and Europe has been difficult. No one wants to spend cash into keeping stock. It’s been more of an ‘in demand’ and less of a stock setup. That said, we finished the year above the 2023 overall, but it was a hard graft to get there.”

Expanding into Asia

In 2017, Manasseh says the company had no regular business

in Asia – just occasional orders without consistency or volume. That changed when the company began collaborating with major electronics and distribution partners.

“In order to position us a real player, we didn’t try to compete on price with local manufacturers, we focused on Shakespeare’s durability and quality – and this has positioned us above most other brands in the region,” he explains.

Opening an Asia warehouse

A major milestone came in 2023/24 when Shakespeare launched a dedicated warehouse in Asia – making it the only antenna company with warehousing in the USA, Europe and Asia.

“This new hub has significantly expanded our reach into eastern Asia, and by 2024, Asia had become a bigger market for us than mainland Europe,” he says.

In December 2024, the company reported its most successful year in Asia to date, with a 20 per cent increase in regional growth.

“The hub has also opened doors to the leisure market in China. In 2025, we received our largest-ever order from China, which was a major step forward for our brand.”

The strategy, which mirrors the company’s successful models in the USA and Europe, has been a transformative move for Shakespeare.

“In Asia, our approach is more selective – we typically add just one new partner per year to ensure alignment and impact. We’re also seeing positive momentum in the Middle East, which has historically been more sporadic. Leveraging the Asia hub is proving to be valuable there as well.”

Trade tariffs tactic: stay nimble

“This year [2025] started strongly and the conversations we were having were positive. However, the tides in Europe are constantly changing and there seems to be a nervousness around spending money on inventory or restocking as quickly as in previous years. I’m still confident that this year will be a stronger and more affluent year than 2024, but it’s not going to be an easy year – across all territories,” he says.

The company’s multiple production hubs have proved helpful in the wake of Trump’s trade policies.

“For Shakespeare Marine, the current trade tariff situation fortunately has not affected our business outside of the USA,” adds Manasseh. “The way we have structured our business, with strong distribution networks and multiple factory locations around the world, means we are lean and can flex depending on the needs of our customers.

“Being this agile is a real benefit to our partners and means we can utilise our various locations and warehouses globally, getting the most suitable and efficient service for our partners, including costs. This is evidenced by an order for 1,000 aerials, which were manufactured in the UK and shipped to USA to avoid Asia import tariffs.”

“So far, we have not experienced any negative impact in business outside of the USA, however we will continue to monitor the market and remain agile for the benefit of our customers,” he adds.

Transferring stock between warehouses could become more expensive depending on Trump’s tariff trajectory – a factor being planned around at Shakespeare Marine. “We are very conscious of this happening and there continues to be a level of uncertainty around this,” he says.

“We are the only antenna manufacturer with a warehouse and manufacturing facilities in UK, USA and Asia, which gives our business the flexibility to serve our customers in the most dynamic ways – one of which is supplying all local markets with local supply. There are considerable admin requirements if this happens which we would need to navigate, however serving our clients and getting product to them is not a problem and will not impact the client.”

Australasia: a game of logistics

The Australasian market provides unique challenges and opportunities. Manasseh says a trip he took to the region in 2023 was “eye-opening”. “It’s a price-sensitive market and local antenna brands dominate the retail space,” he adds.

Selling to the other side of the world naturally presents logistical obstacles – especially with shipping costs making products less competitive. But the Asia hub has helped ease this cost burden.

“We’ve leveraged our Asia hub to reduce shipping costs and improve accessibility. More importantly, we’ve shifted toward a commercial distribution strategy. Partnering with ICOM Australia has been an important move – it operates in the high-end segment where Shakespeare’s premium quality matters most. This has helped us begin to rebuild sales in the region which declined during covid as local manufacturers took back the market.”

What’s next?

Manasseh says the successful growth of the business has been rooted in market understanding and assessing the demands of each region accordingly.

One of the biggest challenges has been educating developed markets. “Shakespeare takes pride in the quality of its antennas, but many regions have been conditioned to believe that cheaper is better,” says Manasseh.

“Visually, a white stick antenna may look the same across brands – but as we know, performance tells a different story. Changing that perception, both within the industry and among end consumers, is still an ongoing challenge.”

When it comes to product launches, regional expansions and partnerships, Shakespeare will continue to adopt region-specific strategies for growth.

This is not the market for a one-size-fits-all approach, Manasseh reaffirms – particularly in the current geopolitical climate where the ability to flex and adapt quickly is proving all-important. ■



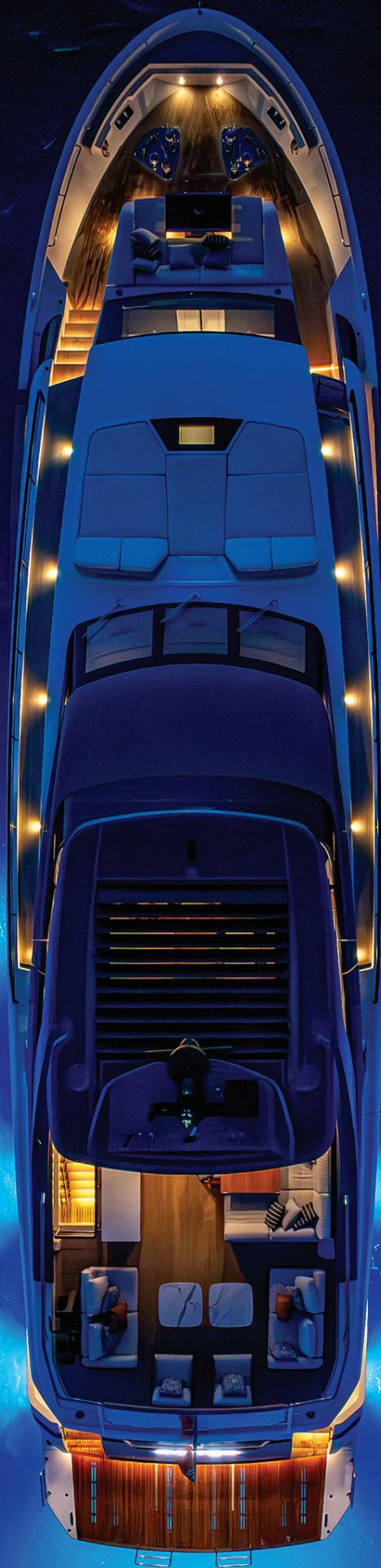
Dave Manasseh (right) at the Maritime UK Awards



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La famiglia factor

Inside Italy's family firms: culture, complexity, and continuity

In July, *MIN* visited seven boat businesses in Lombardy – the region surrounding Milan, Italy, to find out about the DNA and texture of Italian family enterprises.

“Family companies are like wild horses to ride – they have huge potential,” says Alberto Osculati (executive director for the distribution and accessory manufacturing company). Within Osculati’s sprawling industrial complex which spans 21,000 square metres, the company employs 160 plus people, three siblings and their father (industriously leafing through papers and simultaneously tapping on his calculator while ignoring the busy office chatter).

Between them all, they produce 7,000 marine accessory products, distribute around 20,000 and print what’s arguably the biggest doorstep of a catalogue at nearly 1,200 pages.

“In our situation with three of us,

plus my father working together, we have different abilities that complement each other,” says Alberto Osculati.

Family dynamics play a huge part in how many Italian businesses are run. While the diversity of family members is potentially very good, it can be complex to manage.

“I take a long-term view, while my brother [George] is very practical. I share my vision with him and he shares with me the problems to applying my vision in our current reality.”

Osculati explains that he considers himself the “two and a half” generation.

“My grandfather started a shop, but my father built the company between the 1970s and 2000, and in the last 25 years, my siblings and I have grown it further.”

That all family members are inputting into the company



Alberto Osculati

is evident. They’re all yacht owners and they’re all invested in development. For example, the design team’s currently working on widening a step after the oldest Osculati mentioned his boat’s access could be improved.

That so many Italian family-owned businesses are still designing, manufacturing

and producing product is put down to several factors.

One of those is the post WW2-context. In 1948 the Marshall Plan significantly aided Italy’s post war recovery by providing substantial aid for reconstruction, modernisation, and economic development. The aid focused on infrastructure, industry, and agriculture, and helped Italian boatbuilders develop their industry.

“A lot of companies were built in the 50s or early 60s,” explains Osculati. “They were built by a first generation, and now this generation is passing the same company to its own heirs.”

But there is more at play than that. Osculati notes that there’s financing challenges, “In Italy most companies have self-financed because the financing market is not working as well as in Northern Europe or in the US,” and this means that “companies have to find their own way of financing



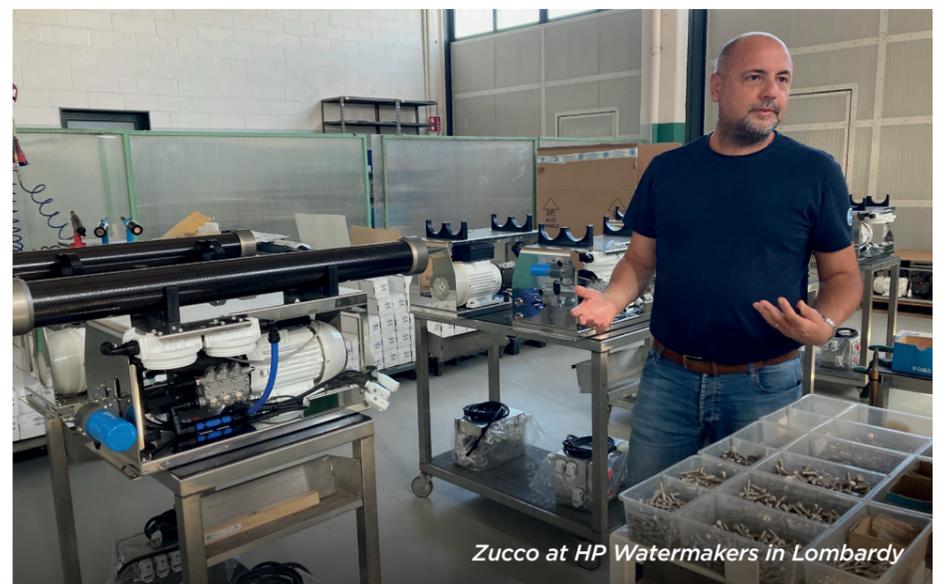
Tender production at Castoldi



Foresti & Suardi making doors for Sanlorenzo



Gianni Zucco, co-founder of HP Watermakers



Zucco at HP Watermakers in Lombardy

“When you have your name on the product... people know you are responsible for it. I want the product to be as good as possible – that is the idea of a family business.”

Giacomo Castoldi, Castoldi

instead of a company growing in a structured way.”

Thus, companies may grow slowly and cautiously, relying on internal capital.

Plus, he says, doing business in Italy is very complicated. “Sometimes family companies can adapt more easily to the complexity,” and that’s why they survive.

“The main problem in Italy is the justice system, you don’t have clarity. I’m not talking about criminal offences, I’m talking about business problems: a land problem, a hiring problem, a problem with the workers, something like that,” he adds.

“You may have to go to court but the answer will only come after five years.”

Another factor for keeping it in the family is that, as Osculati says, “the system in Italy is very, very rigid.” If a company employs 15 people or more, “you cannot substantially fire anybody.” And this means companies stay below fifteen people so it’s easier to find, hire and change workers.

Italy: a market of family-owned businesses for the future

“This area, Lombardy, has always been family business oriented,” says Gianni Zucco, co-founder of HP Watermakers, which has 14 employees. The company makes a wide range of complete onboard water treatment packages, and Zucco’s dad can be found busily assembling parts in the depths of the 3,000 square metre facility alongside the rest of the team. The majority of components are produced in-house.

Zucco believes that Italy is a hot bed of micro companies that specialise in doing small things for big assemblies. Many of those are in the fourth generation, and he expects there to be a fifth and sixth.

“Maybe it’s part of our culture, our DNA. We are a micro company, but we act like a corporation.” The company recently celebrated its 30th year in business.

“The structure of families has always helped the growth of this kind of family business. [In Italy] we don’t leave the family when we’re 18, we stick together and have the same targets. If something is created, normally it’s never abandoned.

“We don’t give away businesses to corporations, even though being company owners in this country or in Europe is very difficult due to overwhelming tax levels.

“We work from January to September just to pay taxes, and from September to December to make our money.”

Zucco says that it’s a cultural thing, one that people from different backgrounds might not readily understand. He says he’s not building the company for the money, but it’s a passion.

“If I would do this for money, I wouldn’t do it. Maybe I’m naive. But I’m sure that my next generation is following [in my footsteps].”

The word passion comes up regularly in Lombardy.

“Family businesses aren’t about Excel sheets, they’re about

“We don’t give away businesses to corporations, even though being company owners in this country, or in Europe, is very difficult.”

Gianni Zucco, HP Watermakers

passion,” says Andrea Gallinea of marine product producer, Gallinea. His sister might not agree, she’s the company accountant. “She saves money, I spend it,” he laughs.

“With family-owned businesses, passion is part of the deal. Family



Andrea Gallinea

businesses can decide to invest and cover costs. There are many opportunities for small companies if you are lucky, and have good partnerships between people inside the company," he says.

The company specialises in marine equipment and makes a range of products related to boat windshield wipers, fans, and marine automation systems.

Gallinea describes the ethos of his company as being to "move what we can." He's all about motion, from windshield wipers to lift mechanisms. "If a shipyard has something to move, we say 'yes'."

But the request has to come from a third party. "We don't speak directly with end customers; we work with OEMs, shipyards, or distributors who handle private clients," he says.

Currently the company's working with Nautys on boat furniture which... moves. Gallinea says the integrated electromechanical movements are perfect for optimising space onboard.

"It's a range of outdoor furniture for boats and homes. This collaboration is with a Korean company that has headquarters in Italy.

"From our perspective, this product line is extremely innovative. The tables can move up and down, have wireless phone charging capabilities, and emit sounds like speakers," he says with passion.

But passion can be followed by pressure to keep it going, although Giacomo Castoldi, the current owner of Castoldi, says he has it all under control.



Giacomo Castoldi

"I've always had this pressure," he says. "I guess my father had this pressure from his father and so on. I don't feel that pressure because I'm surrounded by skilled people."

Castoldi makes both tenders and waterjet propulsion systems and was started by Giacomo Castoldi's grandfather. The original business idea has evolved meeting the market and investing a lot

in research and development, especially in the waterjet side.

Visiting the 18,000 square metre immense site with its 98 employees is like being immersed in two different companies, one creating tenders, the other creating what goes in them – the former was actually established to service the latter. It's a spectacular sight to see the progress of the 50 or so tenders a year which roll out the doors.

The pride of succession

Castoldi says that both tenders and water jets are very demanding markets with competitors.

"If you want to keep the company alive and kicking, you have to invest in R&D and always come out with new ideas. I was taught this by my father and grandfather, and I try to keep the same course," he adds.

Aside from the product developments (Castoldi's launching a new limousine in 2025), he does feel the pressure of having his name . . . everywhere.

"When you have your name on the product, you are responsible for it. People know that you are responsible. A lot of people call me because they know I take care of our customers. I want the product to be as good as possible – this is the idea of a family business."

Italian descendants take deep personal pride in their companies, often seeing them as legacies to pass on rather than assets to sell. So transitioning leadership must be a sensitive but vital process.

Handing over leadership is complex; some successors are hesitant or unsure. Others embrace the role but feel the weight of tradition.

One company which is currently embarking on that process is Foresti & Suardi. It makes accessories – stunning bowls and door handles and more – with its manufacturing facilities split from its main offices, but still in the area of Predore, Lake Iseo. It develops roughly five to ten new items per year.

"Every detail is taken into consideration, we need more time for that, so there are fewer products," says Luciano Paissoni, owner.

Paissoni is gradually offering his son the ropes. "I love my job, I want to be involved, I cannot see myself not coming to the office. But on the other side I am delegating more and more," Paissoni says.

Three years ago, Paissoni senior had to make a decision about the future of the company. After an equity fund made two approaches to buy the business, Paissoni



Luciano and Luca Paissoni Foresti & Suardi

asked his son, Luca, what he wanted him to do.

Luca said he'd quit football to join the company. (He was a midfielder for ASD Montorfano Rovato.)

The decision proved beneficial, as evidenced by Foresti & Suardi's continued success three years later.

The company, established in 1961, currently employs 70 people, with five family members actively involved in the business across three generations.

Shipyard buy outs change business relations

But not all companies can stay in the bloodline. Italy's shipbuilding dynasties have moved on from family ownership. That evolution has meant a meaningful change to doing business as relationships with shipyards and clients used to be family-to-family; now many shipyards are investor-owned, shifting dynamics toward transactional models.

Fiorella Besenzoni - from Besenzoni luxury yacht solutions - says that her company's relationship with shipyards changed about 15 years ago, when the structure of the shipyards changed.



Fiorella Besenzoni

"In Italy, for example (in England as well) shipyards were a family business, like ours," she says from the company's plant-covered headquarters which is tucked away in a residential street but then

opens like a Tardis over 20,000 square metres.

From its facility, Besenzoni designs and manufactures high-end components and accessories for yachts and superyachts, including gangways, cranes, helm seats, and ladders.

"But now the shipyards are owned by funds or they are companies with managers ... But we are used to it, but it's different, of course."

She says that her father was "obsessed with quality and safety," and that has been carried over into everything that the company now does. Besenzoni calls it a family business, but a 'complex' one.

At the end of the day, for any business to be successful, it needs complementary skill sets. And that's what Marco Donà, CEO of Saim, says he has with his siblings. He describes the situation as 'perfect', although that wasn't "a given at the start because we are so different from each other.



Marco Donà

"My brother and I are like chalk and cheese, but we found out we complement each other. I have more of a sales and marketing attitude, while he's more analytical and finance-oriented, which is just perfect." (Donà's brother takes care of the industrial business.)

"We found a way to work together without fighting, something that was impossible when we were kids. My sister [who looks after the shows and catalogues] is close to me and has always been, so I love working with her . . . she takes care of me."

Saim Marine manufactures, imports and distributes high-tech components to shipyards from its 9,000 square metre facilities (it has circa 100 employees) and also provides support for project development. Serving recreational and commercial clients, it has a direct service network along the coasts of Italy, France, Slovenia, Croatia, and internationally.

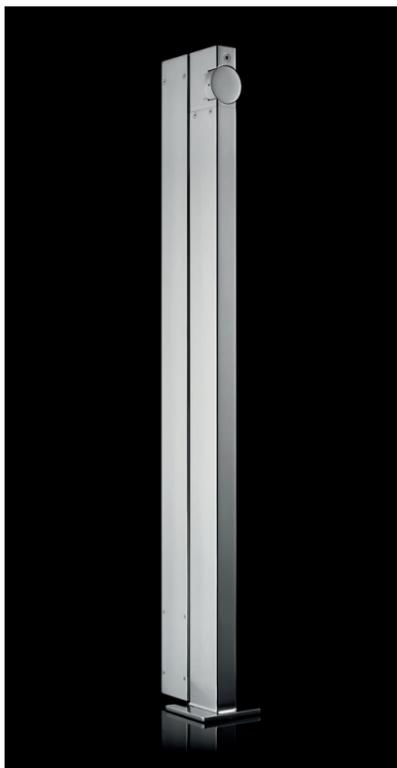
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MARKET REPORT



US industry stagnates as uncertainty reigns, reports Thomas Dammrich

Tariffs, fears of new inflation – perhaps stagflation – and widespread uncertainty are providing significant headwinds for the US boating industry. As a result there is weak consumer and business sentiment, alongside economic weakness.

Sales of new recreational boats in the US peaked in May of 2021 during the manic buying created by the global pandemic, topping off a decade of sustained growth from 2010 to 2019. But for the past 48 months, new boat sales have fallen every month on a rolling 12-month basis, according to data on new boat registrations from Infolink Technologies.

Sales of pre-owned boats have also been falling since 2020. The hardest hit sectors of new boat sales have been pontoon and tow boats. Fresh water fishing boats have been selling consistently in

the past two years and jet boat sales, while small, have seen solid growth. And the strength in sales of larger boats and yachts is showing signs of weakening.

In more normal times, there should be great anticipation for the next bull run in new boat sales to begin soon, as historically the up and down cycles of the marine industry last about five years. But these are not normal times.

Tariffs make trading tough

President Trump is seeking to reshape the global trading order and reduce or eliminate large trade deficits with an aggressive tariff policy.

Some suggest that trade deals will be struck and the impact of tariffs on the US economy, the US boating industry, and global trade will be minimal. Others believe that even if tariffs are significantly

higher, the long-term gain will be worth the short-term pain. But, one thing seems abundantly clear, higher tariffs for all countries are here to stay during the Trump years, making boats exported to the US more expensive.

At the same time, US exports to Europe have still not recovered from the EU retaliatory tariffs on US boats imposed by the EU during the first Trump administration. While those tariffs were removed late in the Biden administration, US boat exports to Europe have not bounced back.

Canada has been the largest export market for US boats but given tensions with the Trump administration, Canadians are avoiding American products. This is compounding the negative impacts of an ill-advised Canadian luxury tax on boats, which NMMA Canada is working to remove.

US boat dealers are finding this to be the toughest market in over a decade with new boat sales falling to 2012-2013 levels.

Dealer inventory of new boats is high, and dealers are struggling to boost showroom traffic, which is simply not enough, especially during what is traditionally a prime selling season. The price of new boats, which are up 70 per cent or more [compared to] ten years ago, is not helping; making new boat purchases a bigger and bigger reach for many Americans whose buying power has been eroded by inflation in recent years.

Aftermarket blossoming

A bright spot for the US boating industry is the aftermarket for boating products. Aftermarket sales tend to hold up in good times and bad. With over 15 million boats in use in the US, and boaters less willing to trade up right now,



Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show



IBEX



The autumn shows will provide a good bellwether

owners continue to outfit their current boats with aftermarket products. Something to keep an eye on though, is that while the existing fleet is still robust, it is at its lowest level in 15 years, down marginally.

Another silver lining, which may result more from low demand for boats, is that the US industry is not experiencing any significant supply chain disruptions.

There was a lot of angst initially about tariffs' impact on supply chains, but unless tariffs return to much higher levels, the supply chain should hold up.

Uncertainty breeds indecision
Beyond the direct impacts on the boating industry (higher prices), tariffs are creating a lot of noise in government statistics for inflation and economic growth, making it more difficult to understand what is really going on in the economy.

Some economists suggest we can still expect two interest rate cuts this year. Others believe that

Beyond the direct impacts on the boating industry (higher prices), tariffs are creating a lot of noise in government statistics for inflation and economic growth, making it more difficult to understand what is really going on in the economy.

as companies realise tariffs are here to stay and start passing through higher costs, inflation will begin increasing again, causing the Federal Reserve to hold off any further interest rate cuts.

Interest rates impact inventory holding costs for dealers as well as increase monthly payments for those borrowing to buy a new boat.

Boating's popularity in the US has historically been due to a large

middle class that bought boats – lots of boats – and a love of fishing.

Over the past decade or more, America's middle class has been hollowed out by inflation and the loss of manufacturing jobs that will likely never return, not because of offshoring, but because of automation.

While one wants to channel optimism, the level of uncertainty in nearly all aspects of economic life globally portends little improvement for the boating industry for the rest of 2025 and likely 2026.

Uncertainty not only affects business decisions, but it also impacts consumer buying decisions, especially for big-ticket items. This is not to say that industry segments that serve the wealthy won't rebound sooner.

To have some idea where the boating industry is headed in the US in the next 18 months, it's prudent to keep an eye on

consumer spending, GDP growth, and inflation statistics.

If I have learned anything in my 25+ years in the industry, it is that companies in this industry are resilient and innovative.

Most manufacturers in the boating sector can do well at current levels of sales, even if sales aren't growing. But boat dealer attrition is going to become a concern soon if sales don't pick up.

Manufacturers who are investing today in new products and innovation will be ready to take maximum advantage, for both them and their dealers, during the bull run in the US boating market. As previous cycles evidence, brighter times will come, the sector may have to be patient, though. ■

Dammrich is the US representative for Global Marine Business Advisors (GMBA) a network of 22 seasoned professionals with extensive experience in the marine industry. gmba.blue



OceanLED



SCAN ME

OceanLED Unveils **World-First Underwater Light with Integrated Underwater Camera:** The Sport Colours – Camera Edition

OceanLED, a global innovator in underwater marine lighting and control solutions, has once again raised the bar in underwater lighting and marine electronics with the launch of its breakthrough new product: the **Sport Colours – Camera Edition**. This game-changing product is the world's **first surface-mounted, full-colour underwater light with integrated underwater camera**—a bold leap forward in both form and function.

With this revolutionary dual-purpose device, OceanLED reimagines what's possible beneath the waterline. For boaters, anglers, and marine professionals who demand superior visibility and situational awareness, the *Sport Colours – Camera Edition* is more than an accessory — it's a competitive advantage.

Technological Brilliance Meets Precision Optics

At its core, the *Camera Edition* combines OceanLED's most advanced underwater optics with a highly capable underwater camera. The lights produce **3,500 fixture lumens**, supercharged by proprietary optical technology that creates a focused blade of light designed to penetrate further than lights far more powerful. Whether you're putting on a show at anchor, creating an incredible vibe on an owner's run, or navigating shallow passages, the lighting performance is nothing short of exceptional.

Engineered to deliver sharp, colour-accurate video even in low-light conditions, with a **wide angle of view**, it offers a distortion-free perspective, perfect for **dockside manoeuvring, detecting submerged hazards**, or even capturing underwater footage of trophy catches.

Designed for Durability. Built for the Elements.

Engineered for long-term reliability, the *Sport Colours – Camera Edition* is constructed using **marine-grade aluminium bronze** and independently tested to **IP69K** standard, the highest protection rating against water ingress. You don't get any closer to complete peace of mind for boat owners, regardless of environment or operating conditions.

The camera is protected by a **specialty toughened, colourless glass lens**, designed not only for optical clarity but also for resistance to impact, corrosion, and fouling. The light is further enhanced with OceanLED's **Tritonium™ coating**, a proprietary formula that helps prevent marine growth and makes cleaning as easy as wiping down the lens with a brush and soft cloth.

Installation Simplicity Meets Broad Versatility

Despite its advanced features, OceanLED has ensured that the *Sport Colours – Camera Edition* remains easy to install. Thanks to its **surface-mounted design**, it requires just a single 12.5mm (0.5") hole—making it ideal for both new builds and retrofits. And like all OceanLED products, it comes with the

company's trusted **No-Hassle Warranty**.

The light is ideal for **sport-fishers, centre consoles, wake boats, pontoons, and small yachts**. For those who keep their boats in the water for extended periods, the light's robust housing and antifouling protection offer a significant long-term maintenance benefit.

A True First for the Industry

"We've taken everything we've learned about underwater lighting performance and added an entirely new dimension," says Daniele Todaro, CEO - OceanLED. *"This isn't just about adding a camera—it's about giving boat owners new levels of control, safety, and visibility below the surface."*

In an era where integration and multi-functionality define marine innovation, the *Sport Colours – Camera Edition* represents a bold new standard. It empowers users with a richer, more informed view of their underwater environment, enhancing everything from **tournament fishing** to **safe night-time navigation**.

For the marine industry, this product doesn't just create incredible lighting effects—it sets a new benchmark for what modern underwater technology can achieve.

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Emerging innovators, talented leaders and skilled strategists – *MIN* checks out inspiring individuals making a big impact in their businesses

Whether bringing fresh thinking, technical expertise, entrepreneurial drive or decades of knowledge to a business, these individuals are not only introducing smarter solutions, but also challenging the status quo in boatbuilding, marina operations, propulsion, and beyond.



Nora Allen
Account director
Rightboat

Allen has played a pivotal role in the successful implementation of Rightboat's new CRM, a system that has enabled the platform's sales and account management team to have a 360-view of customer interactions, leading to quicker response times, automation of administrative tasks, and increasingly personalised content delivery.

Serving as the primary point of contact for many of Rightboat's broker and dealer clients, Allen says throughout her career, she

has enjoyed working closely with a diverse range of clients, ranging from private individuals to large companies. "I enjoy communicating with people," Allen adds, "listening to their needs and wishes and to see how we can make them happen. Sometimes making wishes come true requires a little or a lot of creativity but I do like a challenge."



Kevin Anderson
PhD, senior fellow
Brunswick

Anderson is a world-class expert in metallurgy with a focus on aluminium alloys – a material central to everything from boat construction to Mercury engines across Brunswick's portfolio.

During a 27-year career with Brunswick, Anderson has consistently pushed the boundaries of what's possible, earning recognition as the company's first-ever senior

fellow, a title that reflects both his technical skill and lasting impact on the organisation.

Blending deep scientific expertise with a passion for design and production, he holds 40 patents, with more to come.

Among his most impactful contributions is his leadership in sustainability, says the company. During post-covid material shortages, Anderson spearheaded the use of recycled materials, an approach that kept production running and significantly reduced both costs and environmental impact. His work with recycled

During post-covid material shortages, Anderson spearheaded the use of recycled materials, an approach that kept production running and significantly reduced both costs and environmental impact.

aluminium alloys resulted in millions in savings for Brunswick.

Beyond technical innovation, Anderson is a dedicated mentor and advocate for STEM. He advises everyone from PhD candidates to elementary students and top US government offices, helping shape a more sustainable, forward-thinking future for Brunswick and the marine industry.

Malek Amro
Head of marketing
Charter Itinerary



Sasha Curti
Head of sales
Charter Itinerary



Amro and Curti have worked to develop and rollout Yacht Plan, Charter Itinerary's new captain-focused product/subscription, an all-in-one charter software for yachting professionals.



Evene Tenders launched in 2025

Championing a direct-to-captain subscription strategy in a traditionally broker-dominated market, the duo has aimed to prove that a more inclusive, customer-driven (crew) approach could succeed.

Amro says: “We have helped reposition Charter Itinerary to recognise an overlooked audience; captains. Aiming to shift perception and develop a narrative that positioned captains not just as end users, but as central figures in delivering exceptional charters, we spearheaded the go-to-market strategy and adoption.”

By changing strategy to prioritise captain engagement over traditional broker-led routes, the duo aimed to challenge an industry norm and unlock a widely untapped channel of adoption and advocacy.



Neil Brinsdon
Managing director
Advanced
Rigging and
Hydraulics &
Spencer Rigging

With 34 years in the rigging industry, Brinsdon’s extensive experience is as essential as it is rare. Working for Advanced Rigging and Hydraulics & Spencer

Rigging, which fall under the Ancasta Group, his influence extends across the industry from day boats to bluewater cruisers.

While innovation drives progress, hands-on knowledge – like Brinsdon’s – ensures advancements are safe, practical, and lasting, says Ancasta.

‘Rigging demands acute attention to detail, problem-solving, and foresight, all of which only come from decades of hands-on practice.’

Major yacht builders including Oyster Yachts rely on Brinsdon to consult on their prestigious new builds – an endorsement that speaks volumes about his reputation and reliability.

His capabilities also shine in unique restoration projects. The classic gaff ketch *Cariad*, launched in 1896, recently presented a rare and complex rigging challenge during a complete restoration. Brinsdon’s

Preserving deep-rooted skills and expertise is vital – especially in areas like rigging, where precision and safety are paramount. Few exemplify this better than Brinsdon.

insight, care and use of traditional methods proved invaluable during the historic project.

“Rigging is not something you learn overnight,” says Nick Griffith, managing director of the Ancasta Group. “Much of the knowledge is built over decades. That’s what makes Neil’s contribution so valuable – not just to our group, but to the industry as a whole.

“Preserving deep-rooted skills and expertise is vital – especially in areas like rigging, where precision and safety are paramount. Few exemplify this better than Brinsdon.”



Tom Dowdell
Head of
marketing
Williams Jet
Tenders and
Evene Tenders

Dowdell has been the force behind some of the most creative evolutions at Williams Jet Tenders in recent years. In addition to a full-scale rebrand for the company, Dowdell was also the brand architect behind the launch of Evene Tenders, the company’s new superyacht tender brand.

Dowdell says his most pivotal strategic decision has been “without a doubt, to launch a

completely new brand, Evene Tenders, within the Williams Marine Group portfolio.”

The move further positions the group in the highly competitive superyacht tender space. “We felt we needed to create a separate brand with a more exclusive look and feel to service our superyacht customers,” he says.

Dowdell also works as a member of both the internal product steering group and sustainability committee, and has helped drive development direction and sustainability strategy. His work on the company’s annual sustainability report led directly to Williams winning many awards that recognise the brand’s sustainability efforts.

The company has also been awarded the prestigious 2024 King’s Award for Enterprise.

“Creating and executing a sustainability strategy can be quite daunting, as many companies try to find a silver bullet to solve their problems as quickly as possible to little success.

“We’ve found being data driven and focusing on the small wins to realise sustained improvement over a longer period of time is most beneficial. If the technology is not out there yet, or it costs too



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much to develop, don't panic, you can keep an eye on other industries who may be more focussed, and have the resources to drive change in this area."



Viktor Helgi Gizurarson
Software engineer
Hefring Marine
According to marine intelligence company Hefring Marine, Viktor Helgi Gizurarson 'exemplifies the next generation of marine tech innovators', having transformed from an industrial engineering master's student, to a driving force behind Hefring Marine's backend software infrastructure.

What started as a summer programming job collecting weather forecasts became a new career trajectory when Gizurarson recognised his passion for software development over traditional engineering.

The company notes one of his standout contributions as developing a sophisticated rule-based alert system for Hefring's IMAS Helm product, enabling vessel operators to create custom monitoring rules based on real-time sensor data. The innovation has significantly enhanced operational safety across fleets and opened doors to larger enterprise customers.

Gizararson's biggest challenge, and greatest growth, has come from learning to communicate technical ideas persuasively within a startup environment.

The company says: 'His ability to navigate disagreements while maintaining technical standards has elevated code quality across the entire team through consistent linting practices, CI/CD pipelines, and maintainable architecture.'



Kent Jopling
Global senior manager special markets - marine and powersports
Harman Kardon
Following an 18-year stint with Navico where he served as senior vice president of engineering leading R&D in the US, Jopling joined Harman in 2014 to lead the headphone and wearables division for the JBL brand.

He currently holds 14 patents in marine and audio design. Jopling managed the development and delivery of numerous consumer technologies, including bio-wearables (heart rate), hearables, and headphones (cloud-based and

standalone), as well as some of the first voice-enabled solutions in the market.

In 2018, Jopling left the company but returned in 2021 to take up his current position as global senior manager special markets. In this expanded role, Jopling has completely revised the approach to audio technology implementation for boatbuilders by utilising technologies from other markets and delivering them as OEM solutions within the Harman Marine, JBL Marine, and Infinity Marine brands.

These technological advancements include, but are not limited to, the adaptation of automotive A2B technology, which simplifies the wiring and powering of audio systems for new builds, reducing cost and weight, and delivering a higher fidelity audio experience.

Jopling has completely revised the approach to audio technology implementation for boatbuilders by utilising technologies from other markets and delivering them as OEM solutions.



Oscar Mead
Co-founder
TeamO
Oscar Mead, a British sailor and designer, co-founded TeamO Marine Safety Products on the UK south coast in 2013 alongside his sister, Lauren. The idea for the company stemmed from a tragic incident where a sailor drowned after falling overboard while tethered to his vessel - a stark reminder that existing safety equipment had critical flaws.

Drawing on his extensive sailing experience, including becoming the youngest skipper to complete the OSTAR solo transatlantic race at age 18, Mead set out to develop a new, improved lifejacket.

Following four years of development, TeamO launched the revolutionary BackTow lifejacket in 2017. The product features a patented harness system that turns the wearer face-up and into a safer seated towing position if they fall overboard while clipped on.

In 2024, TeamO's commitment to cutting-edge safety technology was recognised when the company won the prestigious DAME Design Award for its Hi-Lift lifejacket - a product that again builds on the company's core



The TeamO Team winning the DAME award

innovation ethos by rethinking how flotation is used and redefining marine safety for the modern sailor.



Sam Pickering
Head of products
RAD Propulsion
Recognising a gap in the expedition cruise market, Pickering has led the development of one of RAD's flagship product innovations: the Power console—an integrated outboard propulsion system designed for vessels like the Zodiac MK 5.

Tasked with delivering both performance and environmental responsibility, he successfully engineered a solution that operates in extreme conditions with 'minimal ecological impact'. The first working prototype was recently deployed in Antarctica, where its near-silent operation was noted by operators.

Pickering's work in the aerospace sector sets him apart and has been pivotal for developments. RAD says: 'His experience includes contributions to several Airbus landing gear programmes and the development of first-class cabin products for international airlines. This background has instilled a rigorous, systems-driven approach that now sets him apart in the marine industry.'

With the next-generation Power console now undergoing trials in Svalbard, Norway, Pickering is establishing both himself and RAD Propulsion as leaders in the future of sustainable marine propulsion.



Chris Ponnwitz
Chief commercial officer
Mack Sustainable Energy, Mack Boring & Parts Company
In 2021, Ponnwitz transitioned from

the marketing manager the role of group product manager in Mack Boring's electric group, where he shifted his focus to leading the company's commitment to sustainable products through electric power and propulsion.

Three years later, in 2024, Ponnwitz led the efforts to form an entirely new branch of Mack Boring, Mack Sustainable Energy. As chief commercial officer of the new division, Ponnwitz continues to push sustainability in the marine industry toward further expansion and growth, as well as understanding.



Savannah Sami-Bacon
Product designer
Mustang Survival
Sami-Bacon is a rising creative force behind some of Mustang Survival's most

innovative new products. As product designer based at the Waterlife Studio - Mustang's Canadian headquarters for marine safety and technical apparel - she has played a key role in the development of the award-winning Atlas 190 DLX lifejacket.

Sami-Bacon is also leading the design of Mustang's next-generation inflatable platform, integrating the Adapt bladder technology with new features.

The Mustang team says: 'Her ability to navigate and even thrive within the boundaries of regulatory design is helping Mustang Survival push the envelope of what's possible in technical marine apparel.

'As the brand continues to evolve its product offering for global markets, Sami-Bacon's creative approach and attention to both function and form are proving invaluable. She's definitely one to watch in the future of marine safety design.'

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Reflecting on her career motivations, Sami-Bacon says: "Designing at the intersection of safety and innovation is one of the most fulfilling parts of my job. It's not just about creating something that looks great – it's about building products that people trust in critical moments. That kind of responsibility adds real weight to every design decision, and it challenges me to think deeper, work smarter, and never settle for 'good enough.'"

"Whether we're exploring new materials, rethinking user interactions, or refining the smallest details, the mindset is always the same: how can we make this better, safer, and more intuitive?" she concludes.



Alberto Teodori
Project lead development
Yanmar Marine International

After years spent optimising the propulsion driveline in the

automotive sector for luxury high performance car brands, engineer Alberto Teodori joined Yanmar Marine International to address a key industry challenge: to make the leisure marine sector more sustainable.

With specialised knowledge in electrical integration and powertrain calibration, Teodori is part of a development team at Yanmar committed to creating the next generation of sustainable marine engines.

"We are entering a new era of propulsion, starting with Yanmar's SDe series of electric saildrives," says Teodori. "And now we are pushing innovation further. Together with the team, I am working on a new purpose for our existing diesel engines. In this new system the diesel engine is not directly used for propulsion, but to optimise energy efficiency and consumption."

As emissions regulations tighten and boaters grow more eco-conscious, Teodori is drawing upon his software development expertise and experience working on different methods of propulsion in the automotive sector, including electric and hybrid, to deliver projects which are unique to marine.



Alvise Tositti
Chief strategy officer
ACQ Group

Alvise Tositti, is 'reshaping the future of the ACQ Group through a bold, innovation-led strategy where AI, data

transparency, and instant access to knowledge are transforming the industry,' says the yacht services firm.

With extensive experience in international yachting, both on the dock as an agent and within leadership, Tositti has utilised his knowledge of the operational needs of captains and crew to improve the company's offerings.

Spearheading the mix of data and AI, the company says: 'Today, his strategic vision is accelerating through the power of artificial intelligence, not as a buzzword, but as a true enabler of smarter, faster, and more transparent services. Under his direction, ACQ Group is no longer just a service provider, it is becoming an intelligent, connected ecosystem.'

AcqueraPro, and the new AcqueraPro AI, are the results of this strategy.



Sangwon Shin
VP of recreational marine
Avikus

Shin has taken an established commercial product and

made waves recently with dramatic growth and inroads in the recreational marine electronics segment, both in the US and around the world.

Avikus says the reception by the industry for Neuboot Dock II has been pivotal – it received the iF Design Award 2025 and was selected for the 2025 Discover Boating Miami International Boat Show Innovation Award in the Consumer Electronics, Mobile Applications and Software category. The Avikus Neuboot Dock II offers a 3D surround view, along with individual camera perspectives, designed to ensure safe and precise manoeuvres during docking and navigation in confined spaces.

Following the successful launch, Avikus says it has experienced an influx of partners from a number of new boatbuilders and a rapid growth of its dealer network by 200 per cent.



Mary Velline
Show director
IBEX

Velline has transitioned from a distinguished career in the automotive and fire,

rescue and EMS sectors to join the marine industry over a year ago. Having managed a portfolio of three

annual B2B conferences and trade shows previously, Velline is bringing a new level of connection across marine industry segments to foster not only the growth and success of the industry, but the technology and sustainability efforts going into the boats of tomorrow and beyond.

As the former senior vice president of business development for the Minnesota Auto Dealers Association and the Twin Cities Auto Show, as well as the group show manager at Cygnus Business Media, Velline has brought a well-rounded experience of crafting one-of-a-kind and impactful events in the ever-changing automotive industry to an evolving marine industry.



Misha Vysokovskiy
CPO
Savvy Navvy

After a decade developing land-based navigation tools at Yandex –

including a driving app used by millions worldwide – Vysokovskiy has brought his expertise to the marine sector, says the team at Savvy Navvy.

Combining his two passions – navigation and boating – Vysokovskiy joined Savvy Navvy to help evolve how navigation works on the water.

Recently promoted to chief product officer, he continues to apply on-land technology to the marine sector.

From overseeing the launch of enhanced features such as navigation mode, Over the Horizon AIS (OHA) and smart routing upgrades – Vysokovskiy has led a rapid development of features in Savvy Navvy.

Recently promoted to chief product officer, he continues to apply on-land technology to the marine sector.

The launch of Savvy Navvy Integrated marked a significant shift – creating seamless navigation solutions for marine manufacturers and suppliers worldwide. As a result, Savvy

Navy's charts are already embedded in onboard systems. Smart routing with range prediction for electric boats are next, as partnership with key players such as Avikus and RAD Propulsion were recently announced.



Dominic Zammit
Group commercial director
boatfolk

Zammit is spearheading sustainability at boatfolk.

One aspect the group is currently working on is attaining the Clean Marina accreditation across boatfolk's 11 marinas (Portland was the first ever marina to receive the accreditation as well as a further three of boatfolk's marinas to date).

Zammit says: "If you're going to commit to a framework like Clean Marina, you can't do it half-heartedly. It requires genuine engagement – not superficial box-ticking. You need to invest the time and effort to drive meaningful change; that's the mindset we've adopted across the group."

Zammit is also championing responsible business conversations nationally, making a recent visit to the House of Lords with boatfolk's sustainability partner and global think-tank, Bright Tide, to participate in conversations around the future of sustainability and AI. He is also joining as a panellist to discuss diversity & inclusion at the next ICOMIA World Marinas conference in Venice.

"[Sustainability] is not just about setting targets or ticking boxes. We're not throwing money at sponsorships for the sake of it – we're getting stuck in."

"We're actively investing our people, our time, and our platforms into projects that drive tangible, measurable outcomes. That's what makes our initiatives real. When you root your efforts in something you're truly passionate about, authenticity follows." ■



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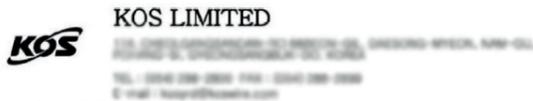
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- hamma® X Strand
- hamma® Mega Strand
- hamma® Coated Wire
- hamma® Duplex 2205



Inspection Certificate

DATE OF ISSUE: 2025-05-29

DESCRIPTION	STAINLESS STEEL WIRE ROPE	GRADE	AISI 316		
MILL CERT. NO.	AC2-202505R-0146	Construction	1x19	Lay	R.L.
P.O. NO.	000000	DIAMETER	3.0000 mm		
INVOICE NO.	000000 (000000)	Length	1,000 M		
CONTRACTOR	TECHNICAL MARINE SUPPLIES	QUANTITY	180.00 KGS (4 SPOOLS)		
CUSTOMER	TECHNICAL MARINE SUPPLIES	Specification	HAMMA X 1x19(DIN 3053)		

CHEMICAL COMPOSITION

Chemical Comp. (%)	C	Si	Mn	P	S	Ni	Cr	Mo		
K02X00466	0.0570	0.3100	1.6300	0.0360	0.0054	10.7900	17.2300	2.0700		

INSPECTION RESULTS

Reel No. : 1 - 4 Sampling No. : 1

Items	Specification	Actual
Dia. of Cable	3.0000 - 3.1200 mm	3.0500 mm
Breaking Strength	MIN. 756.00 kgf	877.3 kgf
Lay Length of Strand	- mm	29.55 mm
Preforming		Good

The fittings range is divided into two core categories:

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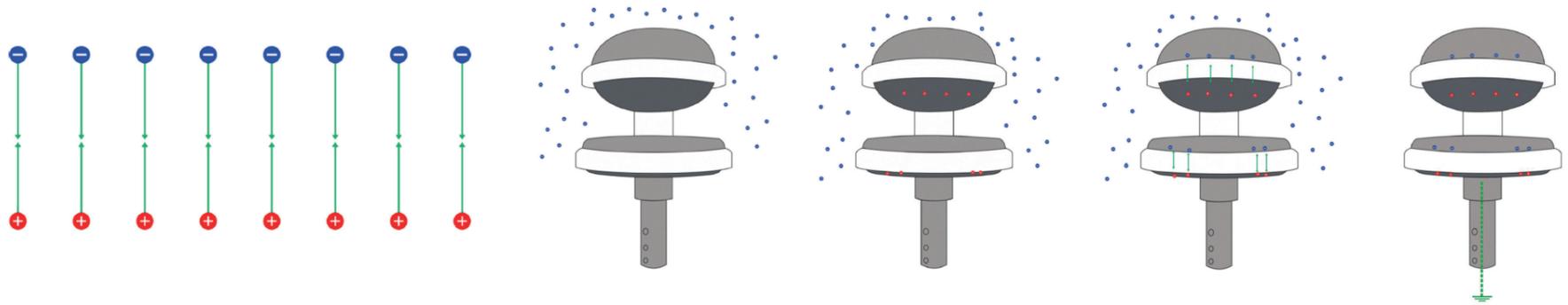




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All hands off deck

Words: Tom Marfleet



Photo courtesy of Spirit Yachts/Luke Dorey

Is traditional boatbuilding – and small boatyards – sleepwalking into a recruitment and retention crisis?

Walk into any small boatyard along the British coast and you'll likely see rows of masts rising over a gravel hard, the smell of resin and salt in the air, the low murmur of radios and power tools. But listen more closely, and you'll hear another, less cheerful rhythm – the ticking clock of a trade stretched thin. Not just the traditional boatbuilders, but the people who haul boats, step masts, carry out seasonal servicing, shoring, and winter storage – the skilled hands who keep the yards working year-round – are becoming fewer, older, and harder to replace.

Today, traditional boatbuilding and small to medium-sized yards across the UK are quietly edging toward a crisis in recruitment and retention. It's not dramatic, and it's not sudden – but it is happening.

"The recently released UK's Modern Industrial Strategy places skills development at the heart of its pursuit of growth and productivity. But you won't find marine leisure in the eight priority sectors it identifies," says Darrell Bate, director of Maritime Training and Development, Marine Society & Sea Cadets. "So it will only be employer demand that will drive

the recruitment the sector needs and their voice needs to be much louder."

Skilled hands, disappearing fast
Much has been made of the decline in traditional wooden boatbuilding – and rightly so. The closure of the International Boatbuilding Training College (IBTC) Lowestoft earlier this year was more than a local tragedy; it was a signal flare. The loss of its courses not only impacted would-be boatbuilders, but also deckhands, riggers, and yard workers who gained broader practical skills there.

But focus too narrowly on boatbuilding itself, and we miss a deeper story. The difficulty isn't only in finding people who can steam-bend an oak rib or caulk a hull. It's in finding people who can confidently operate a travel lift, safely shore a 12-ton motor cruiser, or step a mast in the rain and cold.

These are not low-skilled roles – they require physical intelligence, timing, practical risk awareness, and a commitment to safety and responsibility. And fewer and fewer people are learning them.

In many cases, the same person who sands the brightwork is

also the one in the sling hoist, or handling lines during a launch. As margins tighten, versatility becomes key – but that versatility is drying up as experienced staff retire and no one steps in to replace them.

Training falling through the gaps
With the closure of IBTC, only a handful of training centres remain – notably the Boat Building Academy in Lyme Regis and The Heritage Marine Foundation. But funding for learners, and particularly bursary places, are limited. Meanwhile, very few colleges or technical training providers offer hands-on yard-specific training. For example, a young person wanting to become a rigger, has almost no formal path to do so.

This leaves small yards relying on informal, time-heavy, on-the-job training – often delivered by employees already stretched across several roles.

Notwithstanding this, on the job training has been the most successful route into gaining skills in the industry. Research from Women In Boat Building shows that the most common path to

The people who haul boats, step masts, carry out seasonal servicing, shoring, and winter storage – the skilled hands who keep the yards working year-round – are becoming fewer, older, and harder to replace.

skill acquisition is through on the job training, more so than apprenticeships. Can we be doing more to recognise the impact of long-term skill acquisition whether that is through formal training or informal, on the job training?

Belinda Joslin, founder of Women in Boat Building, adds: "We have a wonderful opportunity to pass-on some of the incredible skills still held by the people working every day in this industry, and we need to focus on that talent transfer. We urgently need funding for the Boat Building Academy – so they can expand. We need funding for Heritage Marine Foundation so they can train marine engineering apprentices to the high level we need.

"The focus should be on excellence and pride in our



The Boat Building Academy in Lyme Regis

heritage and empowering the people on the yard floor to share their skills with trainees and the world. Young people are so far ahead of this industry in the way they are thinking about AI and its impact on their work and life.

We need to be dynamic and forward-thinking and make our world accessible – they’re looking for alternatives, and it’s on us to get on their radar, not waste time lamenting college closures.”

The demographic time bomb

The age profile of both boatbuilders and yard hands continues to skew older. In many boatyards, it’s not unusual for the most experienced staff to be approaching retirement – and for them to be the only ones who know how the yard crane actually works.

In our own yard at Emsworth we have two really key staff members in our yard team. Both of them are brilliant, passionate, knowledgeable and skilled but one is five years past retirement age and the other is in the back end of his career.

We have tried to bring new people into our yard but they can earn as much stacking shelves in the dry and warm in a supermarket and they haven’t lasted long in the often harsh weather conditions of

a boatyard in winter nor with the physically demanding aspects of the job.

It’s not just skilled craft that’s being lost – it’s lived experience, health and safety instincts, local knowledge of towing, timber, and tide tables. You can’t teach that in a PowerPoint presentation. It comes with time, and it comes with mentorship.

Beyond this, the trade has traditionally been dominated by white blokes. There is a huge opportunity to broaden the appeal of the sector to women and ethnic minorities. The focus should be on attracting individuals with passion for the crafts regardless of their route of entry into the industry.

Trained and gone: the frustrating skills drain

A growing challenge for boatbuilders and small marine businesses is not just recruiting trainees – it’s keeping them. Many invest significant time and resources into training young staff, only to see them leave after a couple of years for better-paid roles in adjacent industries.

Sectors such as construction, luxury interiors, and composites manufacturing actively seek out marine-trained workers for their precision, problem solving, and hands-on

experience – and they often offer far higher wages and clearer career progression.

Jon White, general manager for the Yacht Harbour Association, says: “TYHA’s membership now extends across 29 countries, with the vast majority reporting similar concerns around the recruitment, training, and retention of boatyard staff. It’s rare for meetings or discussions to conclude without mention of the sector’s aging workforce and the ongoing struggle to attract new talent.

“Anecdotal evidence suggests that younger generations are less likely to commit to a clear career path early on, and fewer are considering hands-on, practical roles. The UK’s current emphasis on university education – paired with limited promotion and funding for full apprenticeships – only exacerbates the issue.

“Is this challenge partly due to a lack of early exposure to our industry? Are we doing enough to effectively market marine careers to young people? What’s certain is that our industry must remain focused and proactive in building a skilled, experienced workforce capable of sustaining and supporting the future of leisure boating.”

The result is a vicious cycle: marine businesses become

“Young people are so far ahead of this industry in the way they are thinking about AI and its impact on their work and life.”

**Belinda Joslin,
Women in Boat Building**

reluctant to invest in new trainees, knowing they might not stay long enough to justify the cost. As one yard manager put it, “you train them, they get good – then they’re off to work in film or aerospace.”

Without structural support or retention incentives, the industry risks training workers not for its own future, but for everyone else’s.

Jasmin Klimcke from Heritage Marine Foundation, adds: “As someone who started off as an apprentice ten years ago, I believe the secret to keeping an apprentice keen, involved and loyal is respect, responsibility, confidence and variety. One experienced mentor is all a young person needs to thrive in this industry, learning multiple skills, job responsibility and quality.

“Apart from mentorship or apprenticeship schemes there isn’t another option for young people without the financial support to enter the marine industry. Sometimes these people are the most passionate and hard-working

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Yard operators require training and investment

people who sit under the radar because they're unaware of how to enter the industry."

A web of pressures

This isn't happening in a vacuum. Yards and workshops are being hit from multiple angles.

Upward wage pressure

As government legislation raises minimum wages – often a positive development – small businesses, especially seasonal ones, struggle to meet the increases while still charging competitive rates. Unlike mass manufacturers, they can't offset those costs at scale. Many boatyards report being priced out of hiring trainees at all.

Increased health & safety and environmental compliance

Hauling boats is dangerous. Stepping masts is dangerous. Pressure-washing antifoul is hazardous and environmentally sensitive. The regulations around these activities have rightly grown stricter – but the cost of compliance now eats a significant chunk of small yard budgets. Disposal of hazardous waste, registration of lifting gear, environmental permits, scaffold certifications, risk assessments, PPE audits – all necessary, all time-consuming, and all expensive.

Jonny Boys, managing director of Trafalgar Group, a boat services

company based on the UK's south coast, says: "Recruitment in the marine industry has always been a challenge, the talent pool is small, and not enough new people are coming into the sector. The situation is made harder by rising costs, increasing compliance burdens, and the fact that other industries can often offer better pay and more family friendly working hours. Luckily for us when people join they generally stay, but when growing new parts of the business the challenges become highlighted."

Taxation and economic pressure

Yards, especially those on prime coastal land, face steep business rates, rising rents, and high energy costs. Combined with increased tax burdens on small employers, many are unable to invest in apprenticeships or staff development. It becomes a downward spiral: no time to train, no money to train, and no one available to step in even if you could.

What needs to change?

There is a very good boat yard apprentice programme and it has had success in larger boat yards in bigger boatbuilding firms. More support is needed for smaller yards and smaller businesses though.

Mobile training schemes could allow smaller yards to train new

staff without losing productivity. A cross-business apprenticeship and training scheme that has pooled resources to support multiple learners over several yards could provide businesses and learners with the support they need.

In boatbuilding we need more training providers. The loss of IBTC Portsmouth and IBTC Lowestoft is ruinous to the trade and in ten years time the lack of new talent coming into the industry will begin to bite.

Incentivise apprenticeships

Create bursaries or tax relief for small employers who take on apprentices or trainees. Fund short courses in essential yard operations – crane driving, slinging, rigging, shoring – through maritime colleges or adult education schemes.

Balance regulation with support

Government bodies should offer grants to help small yards meet environmental and H&S compliance, rather than just enforce it. Consider simplifying or consolidating certification schemes to reduce administrative burden.

Recognise and elevate the trade

Campaigns to raise the public profile of boatyard work – not just as a job, but as a skilled and vital craft profession – could help attract younger talent.

The industry has always been driven by individuals with a deep passion for boats and the water, often giving up better pay and conditions for the experience of working hands on with boats every day. We should never take these people for granted and they still exist. We need to find them and show them how rewarding a career in leisure marine can be.

Time to act

This is no longer just a question of preserving heritage – it's about survival. Without new blood in boatbuilding and boatyard roles, Britain's small yards face slow decline. Skills will be lost. Boats will sit idle. Waterfronts will fall silent.

The time for action is now. With collaborative action, targeted support, and a clear pathway for training and recruitment, we can safeguard not just an industry – but a craft culture rooted deep in the maritime soul of this country.

Let's not wait until the last travel lift operator retires, or the last mast can't be stepped. Let's gather, plan, and act – before it's too late. ■

Tom Marfleet is managing director of Emsworth Yacht Harbour, an independent marina and boat yard on Chichester Harbour. With 21 years' experience he is passionate about saving the skills and people that keep the industry going.

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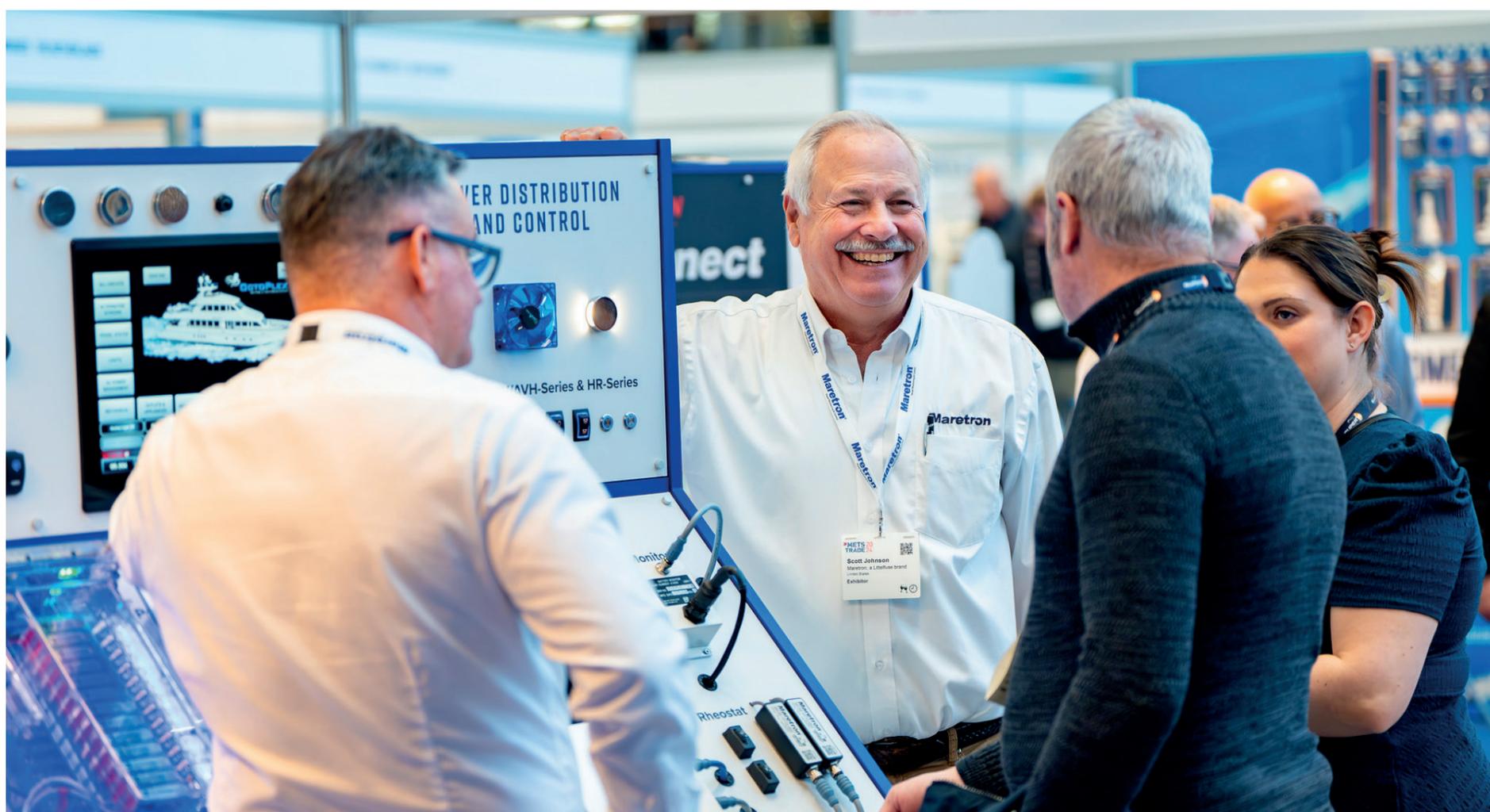
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All eyes on Metstrade 2025



Metstrade director Niels Klarenbeek shares what's new for November 2025 and discusses the appetite for refit and superyacht space and how the trade event has had to evolve

This year, Metstrade is literally bigger than ever. For the first time the event will occupy the entire RAI Amsterdam complex, providing more space, particularly for the superyacht and refit sectors.

Metstrade director, Niels Klarenbeek, says the expansion is a response to a marked and increased demand in these markets. "Previously, we couldn't accommodate the demand for stand space, especially in the superyacht elements, where we had a waiting list for a number of years," Klarenbeek explains.

The 37th edition of the trade show will add hall 8 to its footprint for the first time, where Klarenbeek says Metstrade "will be putting

more emphasis towards the superyacht refit markets.

"The superyacht section is definitely the fastest growing part of the show, followed by the construction and material pavilion," he adds.

This November's Metstrade will also see the launch of a dedicated superyacht stage, designed to elevate sector-specific dialogue by showcasing the latest technologies and applications shaping the future of superyacht design, innovation, and operations. No ticket or pre-registration will be required for the superyacht stage.

"Within the superyacht segment there are numerous other shows,

but Metstrade is that only B2B space. Boatbuilders view Metstrade as the place to have their discussions with their suppliers because at the boat shows they are focused on selling boats and conversing with their customers."

The decision to expand the show is already paying off with Klarenbeek highlighting in July that the show was "almost already at capacity."

Construction and materials

Metstrade has fielded more enquiries from material manufacturers and composites companies in recent years. In response, the team has formed a newly designated construction and material zone, with 40 per cent increased space for 2025.

AkzoNobel has been confirmed as a key exhibitor in this area, with additional participants anticipated.

"We see more paint manufacturers moving into this space - AkzoNobel has decided to move into the new zone to be closer to construction materials and also to be aligned with the superyacht area."

A newly announced partnership with JEC, organiser of the leading composites event in France, will also bring a sharper focus on sustainable materials and innovation in composite technology.

"We noticed that we were fielding far more interest from the composites sector, so we got in

touch with JEC in Paris. It will now be offering some content elements in the Metstrade theatre and, in turn, Metstrade will bring marine-related content into the JEC next year.”

The opening of hall 8 also means a more fluid visitor experience.

“Now with hall 8 open we can, for the first time, open the sky walk between hall 7 and hall 8 meaning visitors don’t need to double back on themselves when touring the show but can walk in one, fluid circle. There’s also going to be a large restaurant area called Harbour 8,” says Klarenbeek.

Flying in the face of headwinds

The volume market has been navigating unprecedented times recently and the impact of geopolitical factors are undeniable. Yet Klarenbeek poses that in uncertain times, shows like Metstrade are even more important.

“Currently there is lots of uncertainty in the volume markets. Manufacturers are facing headwinds – how to calculate the cost of a yacht is getting more complicated all the time because of tariffs, raw material costs and price increases.

“Metstrade provides an arena where builders and suppliers can meet and discuss – it’s about that network and connection. [These times] underline the importance of an event like Metstrade. And so in terms of exhibitor acquisition, we even saw stronger demand.”

The North America stage is new for 2025, with Canada and the US jointly moving to hall 12. Given the current climate there is much to discuss.

Created in partnership with NMMA and NMMA Canada the North America stage will provide timely perspectives on the challenges

and opportunities facing transatlantic stakeholders.

“We believe that the issues of today should definitely be discussed, and that’s exactly why we initiated the new stage.

“Despite current headwinds, the NMMA and NMMA Canada both produce good turnout year on year.

“In spite of geopolitical climates and ongoing tariffs complexities, US companies want to show the world at Metstrade that they remain stable and open for business.”

DAME proves pivotal

The DAME Awards, the highly regarded marine equipment design competition, provide an anchor point for Metstrade. In 2024, the awards welcomed a student from TU Delft University on the DAME jury.

“As a pilot, last year we invited one of the talented students from Delft University to be a guest jury member. It worked so well that we will repeat this in 2025.

“And that’s interlinked with our ambitions for accessibility and inclusion. We want to nurture talent and retain innovators for the marine industry.”

Over the past few years the team has seen the number of DAME applications grow. But he urges the industry to submit their entries as early as possible. “Many businesses tend to submit right at the last minute, which is not ideal.”

Inclusion and access

The Women in Marine industry event, as supported by *Marine Industry News*, is one of the highest attended events across the programme at Metstrade, signalling the appetite for discourse around gender and diversity in the marine sector. In previous years, the Women

in Marine event has welcomed a panel of dynamic female leaders from across the sector to share their knowledge, experiences and visions for the future.

“It’s incredibly important for Metstrade to support diversity,” Klarenbeek says. “So we do everything in our power to help new platforms. When this initiative came to us, of course, we wanted to back it. The momentum is well timed.

“There are plenty of issues about gender equality that still need to be discussed, and so the Women in Marine event is something that we really value.”

In terms of accessibility and inclusion, the urgency to retain and inspire young professionals within the industry is more palpable than ever, as companies increasingly recognise the competitive landscape for attracting qualified talent.

Klarenbeek says Metstrade is trying to take its responsibility to nurture talent and have a positive impact on skill building in the industry with initiatives such as the Young Professionals Club.

Open to all show participants under the age of 35, the club provides an area to connect with businesses and get the best out of the show for those starting out in their marine career.

“If you are visiting Metstrade for the first time as a youngster it can be very overwhelming so the club provides excursions around the show and group tours tailored to their needs.”

Metstrade: the future

This will be Klarenbeek’s fourth edition of Metstrade. Outlining his vision for the future he sees the event becoming more cohesive. “We feel that Amsterdam has really

“The superyacht section is definitely the fastest growing part of the show, followed by the construction and material pavilion.”

Niels Klarenbeek, Metstrade

become the anchorpoint for the B2B industry – not only during show hours but also during the evenings when we host Metstrade events but there are also a growing number of client functions hosted by customers.

“We aim to facilitate all of that. Not to own it or organise it – but to make it more integrated and to give attendees more clarity on what is going on in Amsterdam during the show.”

As of 2024, the Metstrade assumed full responsibility for organising The Superyacht Forum, with Klarenbeek noting the event “delivered really well”.

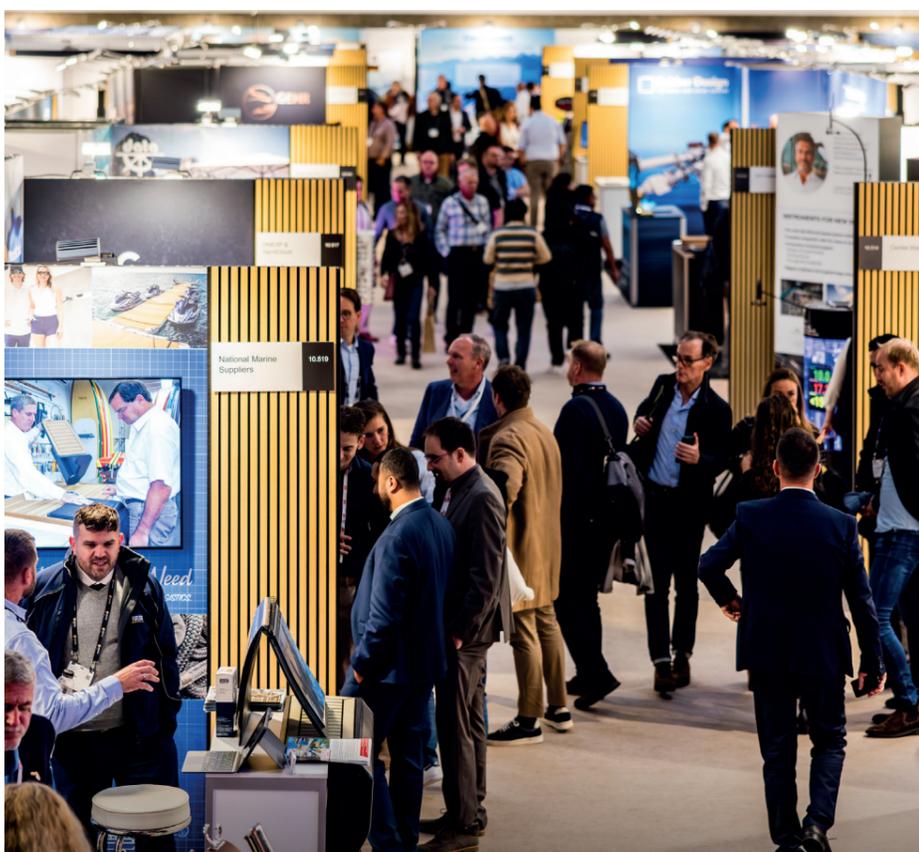
“My vision is for the three-day Metstrade show to be part of a leisure marine industry week, running from Monday till Friday. And anyone globally involved in leisure marine should find something of interest because – in addition to a growing and successful Metstrade – we are expanding the niche boutique events around it as well.

“Last year we had over 1600 exhibitors and we anticipate that number will be topped off again this year. ■

Metstrade
18-20 November 2025

Marine Industry News
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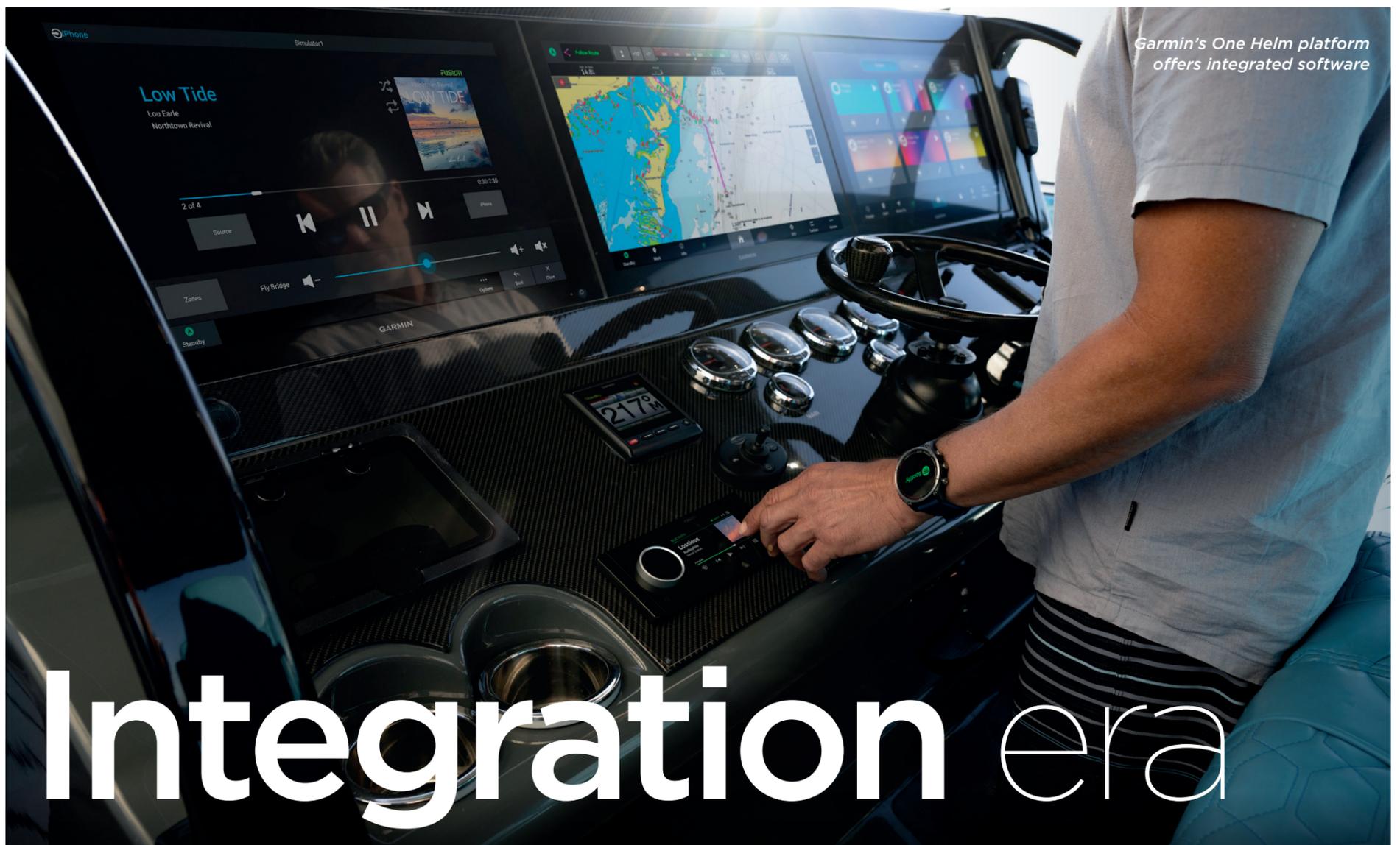


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Integration era

MIN sits down with Kevin Lott – Garmin EMEA sales director, audio – to understand how the firm’s buying spree feeds into its plan for a tech-heavy boating future



In September 2023 Garmin completed its purchase of JL Audio. The latter’s strong market position in the US, in-house manufacturing capabilities, and premium product offerings made it an attractive acquisition despite Garmin already owning an audio brand. And in October 2024 it acquired Lumishore.

Kevin Lott believes that there are two groups of customers for audio: those who want their boat to feel like their car, and those that want it to feel like their home.

“We spend a lot more time in our cars and our homes than we do on our boats. Onboard we want it to resonate with living and lifestyle experiences,” he says.

The ‘car’ experience is where everything is on a big display. It’s all about the steering wheel and the helm, while people on larger boats are enjoying what Lott describes as a ‘living’. “They want that kind of home experience where they can stream their music into multiple rooms playing the same across the whole boat... or have different music in

different areas. We cater to both of those markets with both sound and light... and create a user experience that gives them familiar territories.”

This has become possible for Garmin – a firm that prides itself on its vertical integration (designing, engineering and manufacturing everything from its watch portfolio to its Fusion stereo head units in its own factories) – through thoughtful acquisition.

Uncomplicated acquisition of strategic companies

It’s nearly two years since the company acquired JL Audio (famous for its audio abilities and speaker technologies), and a decade prior it was Fusion (that deal completed in June 2014). But the ethos has remained the same. “We try and make things complicated on the inside, but simple on the outside,” Lott says.

That means having products that plug and play, rather than having to wire-up bare cables or having one set of products with an adaptor to control and connect into another series of products.

“To make it as intuitive as possible to operate, and to install, makes it really enjoyable for the end user, and

makes it as hassle-free as possible for the boatbuilder,” says Lott.

Garmin’s traditional acquisitions have looked for smaller companies with technologies that it doesn’t necessarily have in-house. Except in the case of JL Audio. Garmin already owned an audio brand, Fusion Entertainment.

“To have one audio company in the business, and a portfolio of products with that, and then to acquire another one, might seem a little bit strange to some people, but JL Audio and Fusion co-exist,” says Lott.

The brands were competing in different markets but with different product lineups and market shares in different regions. JL Audio was very strong in the United States with large market share, more so than in Europe. It was a market leader in speakers and amplifiers, while Fusion was the marine market leader in stereo head units. The brand positions complemented each other in both markets.

US manufacturing plant helps secure future strategy

Additionally, JL Audio had its own manufacturing in-house in the United States. Lott says that’s a “world-class facility” for building speakers. Garmin values vertical

“To have one audio company in the business, and a portfolio of products with that, and then to acquire another one, might seem a little bit strange to some people, but JL Audio and Fusion co-exist.”

Kevin Lott, Garmin

integration, so this was really appealing and it offered a new opportunity to go in new directions “in terms of the kind of custom tuning that JL Audio offers, and the high-end installs (premium product as regards to technical capabilities and market position).

“In the US a lot of people were mixing and matching the brands with Fusion stereos and JL’s amplifiers and end units, amplifiers and speakers. The acquisition gave us an opportunity to tie those things together.”

The fact that JL Audio manufactures in the US was a boon and has played out very well given the USA’s political situation.

“JL Audio being manufactured in Miramar, Florida, is a great benefit



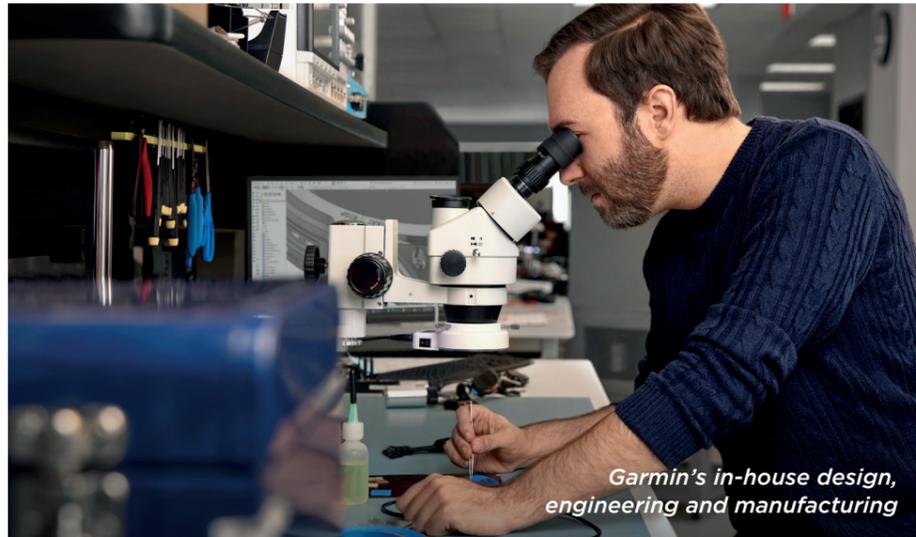
JL M6 Sports Subwoofer, with LED lighting

“We spend a lot more time in our cars and our homes than we do on our boats. Onboard we want it to resonate with living and lifestyle experiences.”

Kevin Lott, Garmin

One Helm is Garmin’s platform for third-party integration. Essentially an HTML page within the Garmin multifunctional display (MFD), chartplotter, it was built so that partners didn’t have to completely rewrite software from the ground-up to integrate into Garmin’s MFD.

The company’s very keen to have as many partners for One Helm as it can. There’s a pretty long list already, from engine suppliers, trim tab suppliers, lighting and audio and many more who are partnered.



Garmin’s in-house design, engineering and manufacturing

been straightforward. “It’s not like we had to scramble to make it work. Our job is to make it work better and make it work more intuitively simple.”

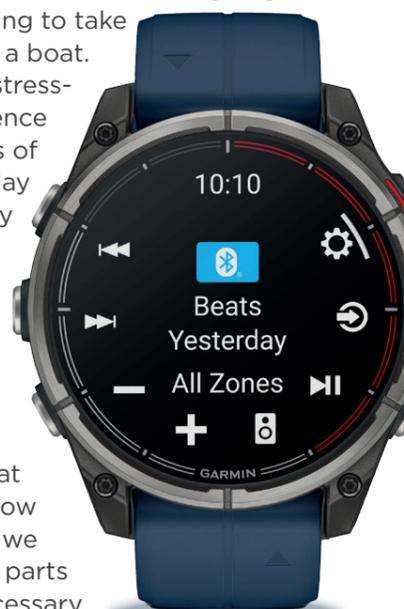
Technology advances at speed

Lott has worked for Garmin for half his life. “When I compare the current Garmin ecosystem to when I started, it is worlds apart. We’ve gone from standalone systems for chartplotters and fishfinders, through to adding radar display. This integration, with so many parts of the boat system coming together, was impossible to think of only ten or so years ago.”

He sees further integration as the path forward for the marine industry as a whole. “And within Garmin, automation and customisation within our integrated platform is going to be a big part of the future. Technology is moving so quickly now, especially with AI. In two or three years it’s going to completely revolutionise a lot of industries. We’re pretty well integrated with the products that we have in-house, and the acquisitions that we’ve made, but it’s going to accelerate over the next few years.

“In five to ten years it will be a really cohesive system that is so well integrated. Things people do manually now will just happen the minute you’re on a boat. It’s going to be amazing to take the helm of a boat. It will be a stress-free experience (some parts of boating today can be really stressful) – we need to take that away.

“Having the broad portfolio that we’ve got now means that we have all the parts that are necessary to make customers’ experience really enjoyable.” ■



Garmin Quatix 8 47mm Marine GPS smart watch

right now. There’s no secret that Garmin’s main manufacturing facilities are in Taiwan. We’ve had our own factories there for more or less the entirety of our business existence. “So we deal with tariffs all the time. They’re pretty challenging, but we try and make sure that we can deliver the best value for our business and for our customers.”

Garmin to expand audio offering

JL Audio also operates in car and home audio, which are areas Garmin wasn’t present in with its Fusion portfolio.

“There are some good opportunities to expand the JL Audio range. Car and RV audio development for us is a major area where we already have a lot of experience from other products in the Garmin range. Home audio is a new(ish) market for us – it’s premium and not necessarily in the mass retail markets that some of our products are in.”

While car, home, and marine audio all sit within Garmin’s overall marine segment, in terms of audio, marine remains the largest part (Fusion only operates in marine). Lott says this is “a huge opportunity to look at ways in which we can develop better products for all three markets.

“We can take what we already do in this sector and apply it to the home audio business where customisation and custom installs (lighting and home theatre) are huge drivers. Lighting and acoustics are often the same dealers and installers – they’re using a hand-in-hand approach.”

Lumishore joins the mix

Lumishore joined Garmin’s ecosystem in October 2024. The former designs and manufactures its deck, mood and underwater lighting in-house (Swansea, Wales) which Lott says Garmin “loves, because that’s what we do as a business.”

He notes that he doesn’t have oversight of Lumishore but says it was a more ‘traditional’ acquisition as it “was a category that is perfectly aligned with our marine business.” And when it was bought, Lumishore (like JL Audio) was already integrated with Garmin’s multifunction displays.

“Tying automated processes together can create an amazing user experience. You can walk on a boat and have the lighting automatically turn on, you can come onboard and have music. It creates ‘sound to light’ so the beat and the tone of the music can affect the lighting around the boat. If you think about a nightclub or a party where the lights are flashing in time with the music, that’s one extreme, but you can have a subtle version of that.”

Boatbuilders driving integration

Lott says that much of this controllability is driven by boatbuilders. “There’s a lot of demand to make whole systems integrated. Boatbuilders want their customers to feel like everything is part of their ecosystem, and that’s what we try and achieve.”

Neither users or boatbuilders want

fragmented controls/displays/ user interfaces. “They don’t want to have to learn one thing for their audio system and then have to go learn a different thing for their lighting, and learn a different thing for their autopilot and their radar and sonar.”

This is especially important as the number of days per year people use their boats is pretty low on average, compared to the time they spend doing other things.

“If you use a complicated system half a dozen times a year you never learn it properly,” he says. “We’ve got to make systems as simple as possible so that time on the water is as hassle-free as possible. Once you’ve learned one control method, it should be consistent across the whole boating experience and as intuitive as possible.

“People just want to enjoy their time on the water, they want to get out and listen to some music, they want to relax in an evening. Our goal is to try and tick as many of those boxes as possible so that customers can enjoy that time.

“It also makes a boatbuilder’s life a lot easier. They can get on with the business of building reliable boats. When the customer takes delivery boatbuilders don’t want to be bombarded with questions because everything’s so complicated to use.”

With both JL Audio and Lumishore already partnering with One Helm, Lott says further integration has



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Below the surface

Prospeed commercial is a growing sector of the business

Prospeed CEO Marcus Hamilton discusses his toughest leadership decisions, navigating 2025, and addressing the skills gap in the marine industry



Aged 33, Marcus Hamilton became the CEO of New Zealand-based marine coatings leader Prospeed in 2023. Growing up in New Zealand, Hamilton has always loved the water and says he was fortunate to combine his love for the ocean with a career. Before joining Prospeed, Hamilton was based in marketing at Fusion Entertainment, which Garmin latterly acquired – a role he says shaped his view of business culture, strategy and growth.

“My first truly formative role was as the international marketing manager for Fusion Entertainment/Garmin,” he explains.

“Leading marketing initiatives across global markets, I had the opportunity to build and lead a team from scratch. Together, we launched key product lines like the Signature Series and Apollo Series, as well as the Fusion University. It was a fast-paced, high-growth period that taught me how vital culture, clarity of

vision, and operating with urgency are to success. One of the biggest takeaways was understanding how a united, passionate team can consistently punch above its weight on the global stage.”

Moving from Garmin to Prospeed, Hamilton relocated to the US to take on the role of VP sales & operations Americas for Prospeed in a step Hamilton characterises as both “personally and professionally defining”.

“Leaving my life in New Zealand to take on a new challenge required courage, adaptability, and grit,” he says. “The experience strengthened my commercial acumen and deepened my resilience. It also gave me a renewed sense of purpose – showing me what’s possible when you push beyond comfort zones and lead with both drive and authenticity.”

“It was during this time I found my stride in developing and executing growth strategies. My favourite advice from my mentor at the time was ‘don’t do good by stealth’. This is embedded into my philosophy.”

A business born out of necessity

Prospeed’s story began in 1999 when founder Guy Jacobsen needed to find a solution to protect his running gear from the fouling growth on his fishing boat in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand. With nothing on the market, Jacobsen

set about developing what would become the marine industry’s leading foul-release coating system. Today, Prospeed is an industry leader in foul-release coatings, and still remains family owned.

Headquartered in Auckland, New Zealand, the company now has warehouses in the USA and the Netherlands, and distribution channels in over 60 countries and recently celebrated its 25th anniversary.

Becoming CEO

Before taking the reins as CEO of Prospeed, Hamilton says he “fine-tuned his approach to business transformation” in his role as Prospeed’s international sales & business improvement director.

“It was a bridge between operational execution and executive leadership. The biggest insight from this phase was the importance of alignment, not just in strategy, but in values.”

“When I was later approached about becoming CEO, I knew the decision had to be grounded in shared vision and mutual trust. That clarity gave me the confidence to step into the role with purpose and direction.”

Hamilton says one of the best devices he uses to lead in the current political climate, is to cut through the noise and hone in on the brand’s DNA. “In an environment shaped by ongoing

economic uncertainty and geopolitical complexity, we remain focused on what matters most: delivering consistency, clarity, and confidence to our customers and partners,” says Hamilton.

“We recognise that many in the marine industry are navigating supply and demand pressures, cost volatility, shifting regulations and trade expectations. In response, we’ve put a strong strategy in place with key triggering points, backed by capable leadership and a clear focus on what we can control.”

Navigating a tumultuous 2025

At the time of this interview, New Zealand had an additional 10 per cent tariff applied to exports into the US. While the current lack of consistency in US trade policy is impacting the industry at large, the broader impact, Hamilton says, is that investors are becoming more cautious and holding off on decisions until there’s greater confidence.

“I can’t predict what’s coming, but I’ve learned the power of cutting through the noise. Stay focused on the market signals that truly matter to your business. Keep a long-term horizon in your strategy and decision-making, while anchoring your actions in what you can control right now. That mindset helps you move forward with clarity and intent, rather than burning energy, resources, and

momentum in reactive loops, over-analysis, or decision paralysis.

“We remain optimistic with a strong strategy in place, good leadership to execute it, and a clear focus on the things we can control,” he says.

A focus on exports

The Propspeed team has navigated some of the drawbacks of its New Zealand HQ being relatively distant to some of the company’s core markets. Growing its network and improving its operational processes has been key.

Today the company is working on optimising efficiency across its business and expansion in north America and Europe.

“Right now, we’re focused on building the infrastructure to support long-term growth,” says Hamilton. “A key focus is the continued optimisation of our supply chain. To strengthen our operational capabilities, we’ve created a new head of operations role and brought in experienced leadership to optimise technology, drive efficiency and build resilience.

“We’ve appointed a new VP of sales & operations for the Americas, Jim Bandy. This strategic hire is aimed at accelerating growth across the US by strengthening support for our teams and partners, expanding market share, and unlocking new opportunities.

“A key focus will be driving a dedicated strategy to grow our presence in the American commercial marine sector.”

In fact, Propspeed has been developing its commercial division globally since its launch over five years ago. Through the leadership of EMEA sales director, Davide Burrini, the company is increasing strategic partnerships, third party data driven product validation, and aligning more closely with the sustainability and performance goals of commercial operators.

Hamilton adds: “Our focus here is aimed at positioning us as a trusted energy saving technology for the commercial maritime industry, as they look to meet a variety of efficiency, sustainability and decarbonisation goals.”

Growing markets: Europe

Hamilton says that while the company holds a strong market position in the United States (US), Europe continues to display an increased emphasis on sustainability with a multitude

of environmental and performance goals across many different sectors, including marine.

“Foul-release coatings play a proven role in aiding vessel owners and operators meet those goals and regulations,” he adds. “In addition to our established key European markets, we’ve recently identified niche opportunities in Croatia, Cyprus, Greece and Slovenia, where we have developed, and will continue to build, successful partnerships.”

He also notes significant growth potential in the GCC region, supported by the recently signed free trade agreement between New Zealand and UAE. Propspeed plans strategic investments to support this.

Making the tough calls

Authenticity is a theme Hamilton circles back to often – and it’s a driving force behind his leadership.

“The hardest mistakes to address are the ones that hold up a mirror to your character. The ones that require deep personal reflection, behavioural change, and the courage to confront parts of yourself as a leader that need to evolve.”

Hamilton says some of the most difficult decisions he’s had to make have involved people and partners at Propspeed.

“Whether it’s restructuring a market, ending a partnership or reorganising teams, these are always emotionally challenging moments to navigate.

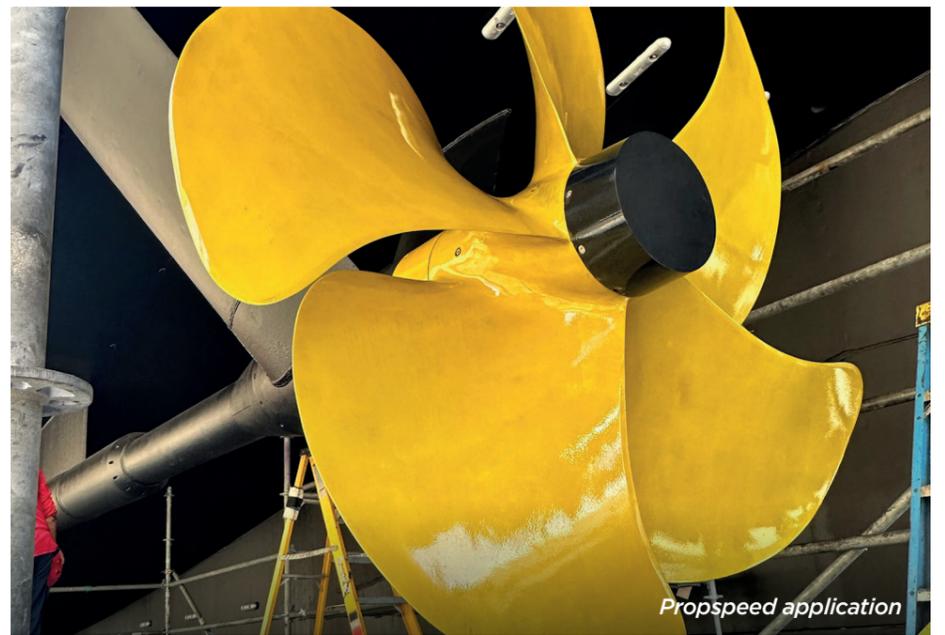
“On reflection, though, the decision itself often isn’t objectively difficult if the input data is accurate and a clear vision is present. What makes it hard is the initial conversation and the emotional complexity of the change management process that follows.

“In the majority of these tough situations, with time and the right approach, the outcome has been positive for all parties. In my experience, effective change management hinges on accurate, objective input data; fair and reasonable benchmarks for evaluation; clear communication; and most importantly, integrity from start to finish,” he explains.

Leadership lessons

Today’s business environment requires fresh thinking and fresh approaches, something Hamilton is open to. “As leaders, we must bring vision, motivation, and drive through our actions, not our position.

“I believe true leadership is the ability to energise others toward a shared mission. Passion is one of the most powerful forces we can harness to achieve this – it unites teams, inspires partners, and attracts customers.



When cultivated, it creates a cultural tipping point where passion breeds energy, energy turns into momentum, and momentum drives the organisation forward with a powerful velocity. In any business, not everyone can share your vision or level of motivation though.

“The hard truth I’ve come to learn is that not everyone has the same capacity for sustained intensity. As leaders, we often set the tone with our personal pace, resilience, and drive, and assuming others can – or should – operate at the same level is a dangerous oversight.

Work-life balance aids retention

“Leadership requires not just vision, but awareness of the capacity of those around us, and of the responsibility we carry to protect their wellbeing,” says Hamilton.

“If we fail to recognise this, if we fail to hold up a mirror to our own role in this, we risk creating a culture that burns bright but burns out. Sustainable success lies in knowing when to push, when to pause, and how to lead in a way that uplifts without overwhelming.”

It’s critical, Hamilton says, to make the commitment to model actionable change and “respect your team’s non-working hours, embed additional rest days beyond standard annual leave into your policies, and openly communicate when you’re stepping back to recharge. When leaders normalise recharge, they create permission for others to do the same, and that’s where true cultural shifts begin.”

In practice, Hamilton points to staff retention and development as a reflection of Propspeed’s success in this area.

“Retaining and developing talent remains a top priority. This commitment is reflected across the business, from my own journey starting as VP of sales & operations Americas and now serving as CEO, to our technical manager who began as a product development chemist, our EMEA technical sales manager who started as the Italian

“Not everyone has the same capacity for sustained intensity. As leaders, we often set the tone with our personal drive and assuming others can – or should – operate at the same level is a dangerous oversight.”

Marcus Hamilton, Propspeed

sales manager, and our production supervisor who began on the shop floor – just to name a few.”

He’s also points out the diversity within the workforce – citing that currently 43 per cent of his team are women and the workforce represents ten nationalities.

“Looking ahead,” says Hamilton, “the marine industry needs to continue addressing the skills gap by creating more pathways into the sector, whether through apprenticeships, hands-on training, or greater visibility of career opportunities.”

Given a magic wand, Hamilton says he would accelerate two things in the marine industry; the industry’s transition to more sustainable practices without compromising on performance, and increasing accessibility to future generations.

“On the environmental side, I’d fast-track global collaboration on consistent sustainability standards, giving businesses the clarity and confidence to invest boldly in cleaner, more efficient solutions.

“And, I’d make marine careers more accessible and appealing, especially to younger generations. There’s incredible opportunity in this industry, from cutting-edge technology to meaningful contributions to ocean health, but we need to tell that story better and create pathways for people to enter and grow within the sector.

“The future of our sector depends on both: having the right technologies in place and the right people to drive them forward.” ■



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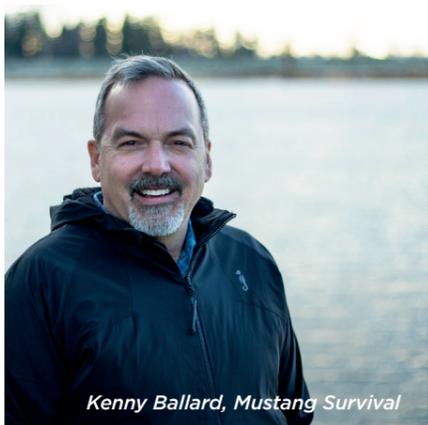


Survival of the fittest

President of Mustang Survival talks tariffs and the changing manufacturing landscape



Scott Sawyer in Atlas



Kenny Ballard, Mustang Survival

American-owned and Canadian headquartered, safety and outdoor technical apparel specialist, Mustang Survival has manufacturing based in China, the US, Canada, Cambodia and Vietnam. Given the current market turmoil, particularly with oscillating tariffs, the company - along with many businesses in the marine space - has had some big decisions to make.

Kenny Ballard, who has been president of Mustang Survival since 2024, says that the current US administration's trade and tariff policies have caused widespread uncertainty and had a negative impact on the business.

"The tariffs have created market uncertainty and caused hesitation to purchase by retailers and consumers," he says. "However, we have mitigated the financial impact through a diversified manufacturing base and slight MSRP increases on select products."

Mustang has been manufacturing product in Vietnam and Cambodia for over nine years. Recently, the company has accelerated the move from China due to tariffs and will be increasing the output in both Vietnam and Cambodia as a result going forward.

Ballard says. "We have owned

manufacturing in the US and Canada, with contract manufacturing in China, Cambodia and Vietnam. The bulk of our revenue comes from north American manufactured [product].

"[We] increased the velocity by shifting from Chinese to Vietnamese and Cambodian manufacturing," he says.

As many brands are finding, Ballard says the issue with nearshoring or reshoring comes down to cost and access. "The challenge is the labour cost differential and access to raw materials has made this transition difficult."

The marine industry in 2025

Founded 58 years ago, Mustang Survival, along with sister brands including Henshaw Inflatables and Wing Inflatables sit under The Wing Group.

Ballard characterises the mood in the north American marine industry as "cautious to pessimistic". He adds: "Boat manufacturers are anticipating significant shortfalls due to economic uncertainty and low consumer confidence."

Having previously held executive roles with brands including Osprey, SwissGear and Wenger Outdoor, Ballard is well versed in the outdoor market. When he took the reins at Mustang, he oversaw the newly moved and expanded Jacksonville Florida plant, operations in Spencer, Virginia, and the overseas office in Salisbury, UK.

While Mustang Survival is on track to meet its 2025 budget, showing strong growth over 2024, Ballard says international interest has been slow due to economic uncertainty and reduced consumer spending.

As the company navigates balancing trade policy shifts while

maintaining competitiveness and compliance, Ballard says the company is trading "thoughtfully".

"We are carefully evaluating our ability to absorb cost increases due to punitive tariffs and the potential negative impact these would have on consumer purchasing decisions."

Trends in marine safety products

Ballard says new inflatable flotation and technical apparel products, along with increased demand for its military products due to geopolitical unrest and the need for best-in-class flotation and dry solutions for special operations is driving growth for the company currently. Mustang has also seen increased sales in Canada.

"Canada has seen better than expected results year-to-date, while the EU has lagged behind expectations. However, we anticipate to get back on track by the end of the year," he adds.

In 2024, *Time* magazine awarded the Mustang's Atlas 190 DLX Pro Sensor Life Jacket its Best Invention of 2024 gong - projecting the marine apparel and safety equipment company's innovation to the masses.

In terms of products and product suites that have underperformed or outperformed expectations, Ballard says: "Our new inflation products have performed very well. The ISO-approved Atlas 190 DLX Life Jacket has been well received in both Europe and north America. Our new Harmonized Level 70 (USCG and TC approved) Elite 120 and 190 inflatable PFDs, are highly anticipated in north America and have just been launched.

"Our increased commitment to R&D is a direct result of the opportunities we see to

"We are carefully evaluating our ability to absorb cost increases due to punitive tariffs and the potential negative impact these would have on consumer purchasing decisions."

**Kenny Ballard,
Mustang Survival**

add innovation into this space and continue to lead.

"We continue our efforts to reduce PFAS chemicals, utilising the highest quality materials, and maintain an unwavering commitment to best-in-class manufacturing quality. This ensures our products have a longer product life, and we increased our repair and servicing capabilities to reduce waste." ■



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Risky business

Ruby Spence, account handler for Haven Knox-Johnston Commercial, outlines what businesses are missing – and what they risk – when it comes to insurance

Building a successful business in any marketplace requires a huge amount of dedication, with problem-solving, long hours, and an intense focus on the end goal all very much the norm. While the marine industry is a great place to trade and develop a business, it does come with more than its fair share of risk, to add to the complexity of the day to day running.

As such, appropriate insurance cover is a key consideration to ensure that you have protection and business continuity if you find yourself in a worst-case scenario. Using the services of a Marine Trade Insurance provider or broker means that you will benefit from years of experience, helping to spot areas of concern that you may not even consider yourself.

Ensuring your insurance cover accurately reflects your business needs is critical and, in some cases, existential. There are certain areas where particular attention is needed where, in HKJ's experience, businesses tend to slip up most frequently.

Employers Liability Insurance

Employers' liability (EL) insurance provides cover to employers in respect of negligence claims made against them by their employees as a result of injury in the workplace, or if they contract a disease when in the working environment. It is a legal requirement for businesses with multiple directors, limited companies that have one or more people on the payroll, and those employing contractors, labourers and volunteers who perform their role under guidance. However, EL is not a legal requirement if the employee

is a relative of the insured; if the company has one employee who also owns more than 50 per cent of the shares; or if the insured employs people who are not resident in the UK. Failing to maintain this coverage can result in fines of up to £2,500 per day. In the UK the policy must provide at least £5 million of cover.

Example claim:

An employee injures themselves operating a travel lift due to the employer's negligence. This could be due to poor maintenance, no training or a lack of protective equipment provided.

An employee becomes unwell due to prolonged exposure to paint fumes working in a spray booth. This could be due to poor maintenance, no training or a lack of protective equipment provided.

Estimating sums insured

Regardless of whether it's buildings, stock, contents, or plant, inaccurate estimations of value can leave a business under insured in the event of a loss. Regularly obtaining rebuild valuations and maintaining a stock, contents and plant inventory can prevent financial setbacks in the event of a claim. When values change over time, ensuring your insurance provider is updated and your policy is adjusted is important. A simple oversight of declared value could cause a major problem for your business, possibly even closure.

Example of what would happen in the case of an under insured claim:
An office & chandlery building insured for £250,000 is destroyed due to an electrical fire. The

insurers loss adjuster visits and advises it will cost £500,000 to return to its original state. In this scenario, you would be 50 per cent under insured, which would trigger an under insurance clause known as 'law of average'. In a claim settlement, the insurers would probably settle at 50% of the sum insured for which you would receive £125,000. Additional costs of £375,000 after the settlement would be your responsibility.

Business risks

Failure to fully assess your specific business risks can create gaps in coverage leaving you exposed. As previously said, each business in the marine trade is unique and as such it is vital to ensure that your insurance policy is tailored accordingly. It is often the case that a generic off the shelf business insurance policy will not be adequate for businesses operating in the marine environment.

Example of risk not covered:

A marketing agency undertaking film work onboard boats has a generic business insurance cover. In the small print, the policy excludes work undertaken whilst afloat on the water leaving the business exposed to all risks during this work.

Updating your coverage

Businesses evolve as they grow, and in turn so do their risks. Failing to update your policy annually to reflect these changes can result in outdated coverage which is not fit for the businesses' current trading activities. Staying proactive and adapting your insurance cover to your business's current state is a key aspect of risk management.

Geographic scope of the policy

Business insurance often comes with geographical working restrictions. If you are planning on conducting business off site or overseas, it is recommended to check that your policy will offer adequate coverage or consider adding business travel insurance. Overlooking this aspect may expose your business and employees to unforeseen risks and costs.

Example claim:

A marine engineer picks up a job to service several engines in the South of France. Following a spillage of oil an insurance claim is made. The policy only covers trading activities in the UK and Ireland as a geographical region, so his claim is rejected.

Choosing the most appropriate policy

When comparing policies, it's important to not only consider cost but also coverage levels, ongoing administration fees, excesses, and the insurer's reputation for service when you need help. Sometimes, investing a bit more at the outset ensures comprehensive protection and peace of mind throughout the year. Not all insurance policies are created equally.

As with all insurance policies, the importance of thoroughly reading the small print, including any policy endorsements and exclusions, cannot be overstated, as failure to do so could result in a claim not being paid.

A professional marine trade insurance provider will talk you through the ins and outs of each policy and help build the right cover for your business. ■

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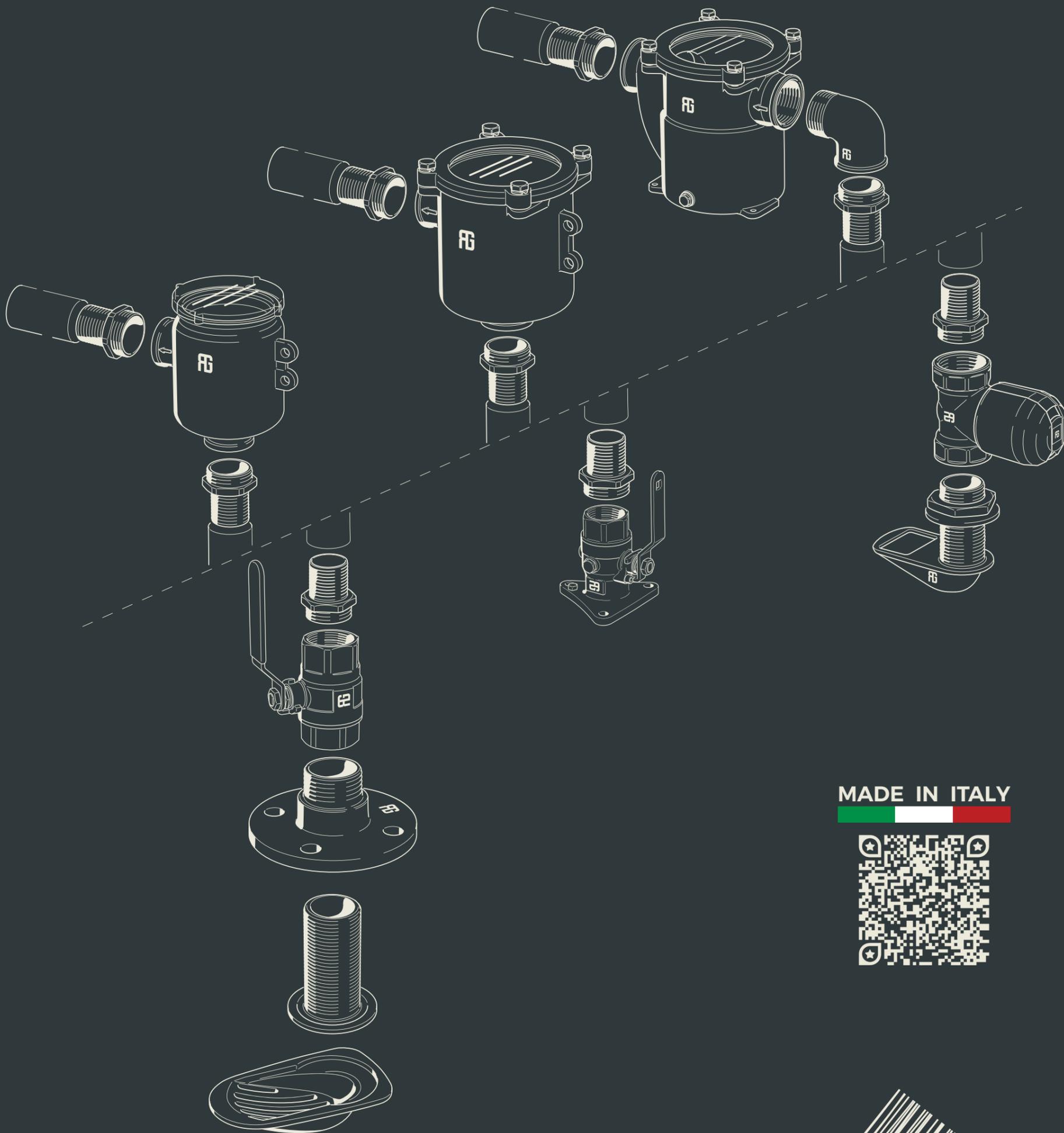
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